

STEAM DAYS

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GREAT EASTERN LINES IN LONDON

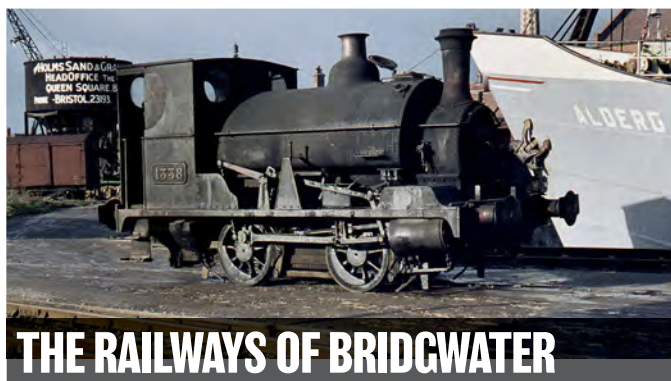
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COLOUR



PLUS
MERTHYR AND
ITS SUB-SHEDS



WEST HIGHLAND LINE PUSH-PULL



THE RAILWAYS OF BRIDGWATER

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KEY

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38 Operating from Rhymney shed but allocated to Merthyr, '5600' class 0-6-2Ts handled the needs of Ogilvie colliery through to the end of steam operations from the shed, in March 1965, the route being the truncated Bargoed & Pant line that diverged northwest from Bargoed station. Such was the ferocity of the climb that northbound trains of empty mineral wagons had to be banked, this view records such a spectacle at Darran & Deri in the latter days of steam operation – a brace of '5600s' are on the rear. Although seen on ex-Rhymney Railway metals, before reaching Ogilvie Colliery Branch Junction the train will pass over an 'invisible' end-on connection to ex-Brecon & Merthyr Railway territory – both companies wished to build a line in the Bargoed Rhymney valley but at its narrowest point there was only room for one railway, so a compromise saw them 'meet in the middle' and agree to 'limited' running powers. John Carter/R N Smith Collection

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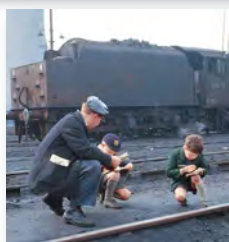
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Tom Rayner relates a 'scary' incident after 'The Cunarder' boat train from Southampton docks arrived at London (Waterloo), with Eastleigh shed's Bob Radford and Harry Tizzard on the footplate.



52 'C15' 4-4-2T No 67460 leaves Arrochar & Tarbet for Craigendoran in September 1959, the train unusually made up of the two push-pull coaches with driving cabs. Colour-Rail.com/SC159

13 Steam Days at Bridgwater

Stanley Jenkins investigates the railways of this Somerset town and its docks, the GWR's Bristol to Exeter main line, and the branch from Edington on the S&DJR line from Evercreech Junction.



TRAINS of thought

In this issue we visit South Wales and take a look at Merthyr and its sub-sheds. I was a regular visitor to South Wales from the early 1950s until the early 1980s, sometimes with my two sons, Ian and Andrew, both now 'king pins' in the production of *Steam Days* magazine. All three of us loved our visits to South Wales, as we were all interested in the valleys' bus and railway scene, and also the industrial scene in the collieries, and then into diesel days.

When I was a director of Oxford Publishing Company in the 1970s and early 1980s I organised three rail tours from Oxford into South Wales – The 'Ebbw Vale Rambler' on September 18, 1977, the 'Welsh Valleys Rambler' on September 17, 1978 and the 'Welsh Collieries Rambler' on April 13, 1980. Prior to each of these rail tours taking place, I would go to South Wales for a trip over each of the routes in advance, and then compile a 24-page illustrated booklet providing historic information and points of interest to be seen from the train.

It was thanks to Ceinfryn Williams, Wally Shuff and Wally Jenkins of the Newport and Cardiff divisions, the lunchtime hospitality of John Owen of the Steel Company of Wales at its premises in Dowlais, and the staff at Mountain Ash colliery that made this possible, allowing me to take cab and brake van rides to compile notes for the tour booklet. To some places we travelled by car, such as when Wally Shuff drove me up to Bedwas colliery at Trethomas, stopping on the way to look at Rhiwderyn station (by then a private house), and Wally being annoyed to find that the signal he had bought from there was missing!

Our rail tour trains were hauled by various diesels classes, with the April 1980 tour top-and-tailed by pairs of class '37' diesels up to Dowlais Furnace Top, as there were no run-round facilities there. Welsh colliery sites, etc, visited or viewed from these rail tours included Blaenavon, Rose Heyworth, Six Bells, Ebbw Vale, Cwm Bargoed, Celyn North and South collieries, Mountain Ash, who laid on working steam for us, Oakdale and Bedwas, to name but a few. At Blaenavon on September 18, 1977, with the mayor of Newport travelling with us, I arranged for our train to be greeted by the Blaenavon male voice choir, with one of our drivers joining the singers with tears in his eyes – an emotional moment for him. For us it was the first of two visits up that line. I will never forget these special trips, and a great time was had by one and all.

One of my final visits to the valley lines was to Merthyr on July 23, 1981, with my son Andrew, to witness class '56' diesel No 56037 being named *Richard Trevithick* at the station by his great, great, great granddaughter Mrs Cherry Mitchell. No 56037's train included a replica of Trevithick's *Penydarren* steam locomotive, the original being credited with the world's first ever steam-hauled railway journey, in 1804 on the nine-mile route from the Penydarren iron works to a canal wharf near Abercynon. Enjoy your read and your own happy memories.

Rex Kennedy

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We contrast express and suburban steam-hauled operations between Liverpool Street and Stratford, and visit the North Woolwich line.

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D K Jones looks at Merthyr's GWR-built engine shed, its predecessors and three sub-sheds, in Rhymney and Dowlais, together with an insight into its duties.

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Push-pull worked from 1940 to 1959, David Anderson and Andrew Kennedy review the local passenger duties over 19½ miles of the West Highland line in BR days.

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The National Collection – The wilderness years
Britain's titled trains – 'The Flying Scotsman'
Raglan – A GWR country station
American-built locomotives on Britain's railways
SR South Central push-pull trains in full colour

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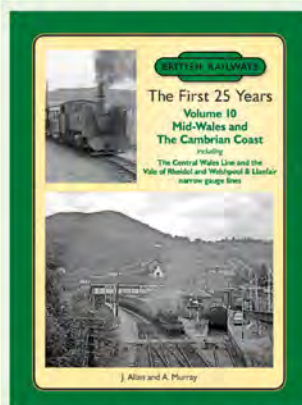
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Cover: One mile out from London's Liverpool Street station, Gresley 'B17' or 'Sandringham' class 4-6-0 No 61607 *Blickling* passes Bethnal Green station with a down Cambridge express on October 7, 1958, the locomotive being Cambridge-allocated at the time. Named after a stately home and estate at Aylsham in Norfolk, in 1928 it was the home of the Marquess of Lothian and in 1501 was the birthplace of Anne Boleyn.
K W Wightman



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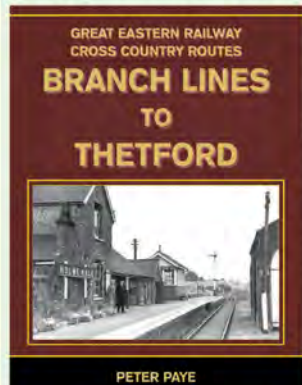


British Railways The First 25 Years **Vol. 10: Mid-Wales and The Cambrian Coast** including the Central Wales Line and the Vale of Rheidol and Welshpool & Llanfair narrow gauge lines

J. Allan & A. Murray

This volume covers the lines in mid-Wales, from Oswestry out to the Cambrian Coast. We start at Ruabon, following the line to Bala Junction, taking the branch to Blaenau Ffestiniog before resuming our journey west. Forking north at Barmouth Junction (Morfa Mawddach) to Barmouth itself we go up the coast to Portmadoc and on to the terminus at Pwllheli. Returning to Barmouth Junction we turn south to Aberdovey and reach Dovey Junction where we take the line to Aberystwyth to allow a visit to the Vale of Rheidol narrow-gauge line. We return to Dovey Junction and go east through Machynlleth to Moat Lane Junction and diverting onto the former Mid-Wales Railway down to Three Cocks Junction. This line crossed the former L&NWR Central Wales line at Builth and so we cover the part of that line in Mid-Wales, from Craven Arms as far south as Llandovery. Resuming our journey at Moat Lane Junction we stop at Welshpool to visit another narrow-gauge line, the Welshpool & Llanfair, before our final leg to Oswestry, pausing briefly along the way to travel down the short branch to Llanfyllin. Oswestry was the headquarters of the Cambrian Railways and we end with a visit to the depot and works there. Ex-Cambrian, GWR, L&NWR, LM&SR and BR 'Standard' classes all feature.

208 pages, laminated board covers. ISBN 9781911038 72 6. **£22.50 + £4 p&p**

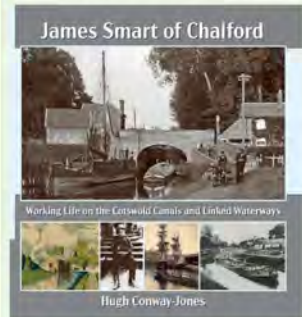


BRANCH LINES TO THETFORD GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY CROSS COUNTRY ROUTES PETER PAYE

Before the coming of the railways the East Anglian towns of Bury St Edmunds and Thetford enjoyed periods of prosperity for they were linked by waterways to the port of Kings Lynn. Chronic neglect of the Norfolk harbour was not helped by the advent of various railway routes from the 1840s, for these only offered roundabout time consuming journeys. For local businessmen the solution was to build a direct railway linking Bury with Thetford and Watton, where local burghers were equally keen to connect with the expanding railway empire at Swaffham. Three companies were formed: the Bury St Edmunds & Thetford, the Thetford & Watton and the Watton & Swaffham.

All three were ailing concerns, with the BSE&T selling out to the GER in 1878 and the others entering into a working agreement until being absorbed in 1898. The Bury to Thetford and Thetford to Swaffham lines thereafter operated as separate branches until closure in the 1950s and 1960s. In a far from mundane existence they served parts of Norfolk and Suffolk with quiet efficiency, playing a huge role during two world wars. Their essential involvement in the first conflict, with the exercising of men and horses, and the development of mechanised warfare in the form of the tank, is largely forgotten, whilst the servicing of several military airfields, as well as one of the largest bomb dumps in the country and a chemical warfare establishment, during the second is legendary.

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James Smart of Chalford Working Life on the Cotswold Canals and Linked Waterways Hugh Conway-Jones

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relevant canals. The story gives a wonderful insight into the lives of Victorian barge and boatmen, and shows how James Smart coped with managing his far-flung business in the days before the telephone.

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CALEDONIAN RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVES THE CLASSIC YEARS H.J.C. CORNWELL

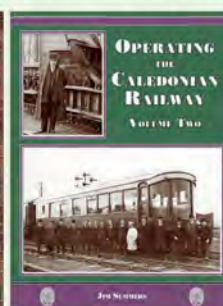
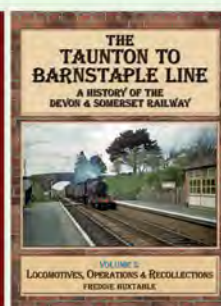
The Classic Years of the Caledonian Railway's locomotives cover the designs of Dugald Drummond, John Lambie, J.F. McIntosh and William Pickersgill. During this period, the Company was at the forefront of locomotive design and produced, particularly in the 4-4-0s, the classic Victorian British locomotive. For express passenger work, locomotives capable of climbing to Beattock summit and running the long distance from Carlisle to Perth were required. For goods traffic, the numerous collieries and industrial plants of the Central Belt had to be handled, together with the associated shunting at numerous sidings and yards. Weight restrictions on the hilly Callander & Oban line required bespoke designs. Throughout the period, passenger locomotives displayed the Company's distinctive blue livery which set them apart from all others. In this volume, the author describes the design practices developed by each of the Locomotive Superintendents, followed by details of each class, accompanied by suitable drawings and illustrations. The Caledonian's express trains attracted the attention of several enthusiasts of the day, whose recordings provide added detail of locomotive performance. Together with David Hamilton's Caledonian Locomotives: The Formative Years, these two volumes provide the definitive history of Caledonian Railway motive power.

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British Railways The First 25 Years **Vol. 9: London** The London Midland Region including the London, Tilbury & Southend Line J. Allan & A. Murray

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Drama on 'The Cunarder'

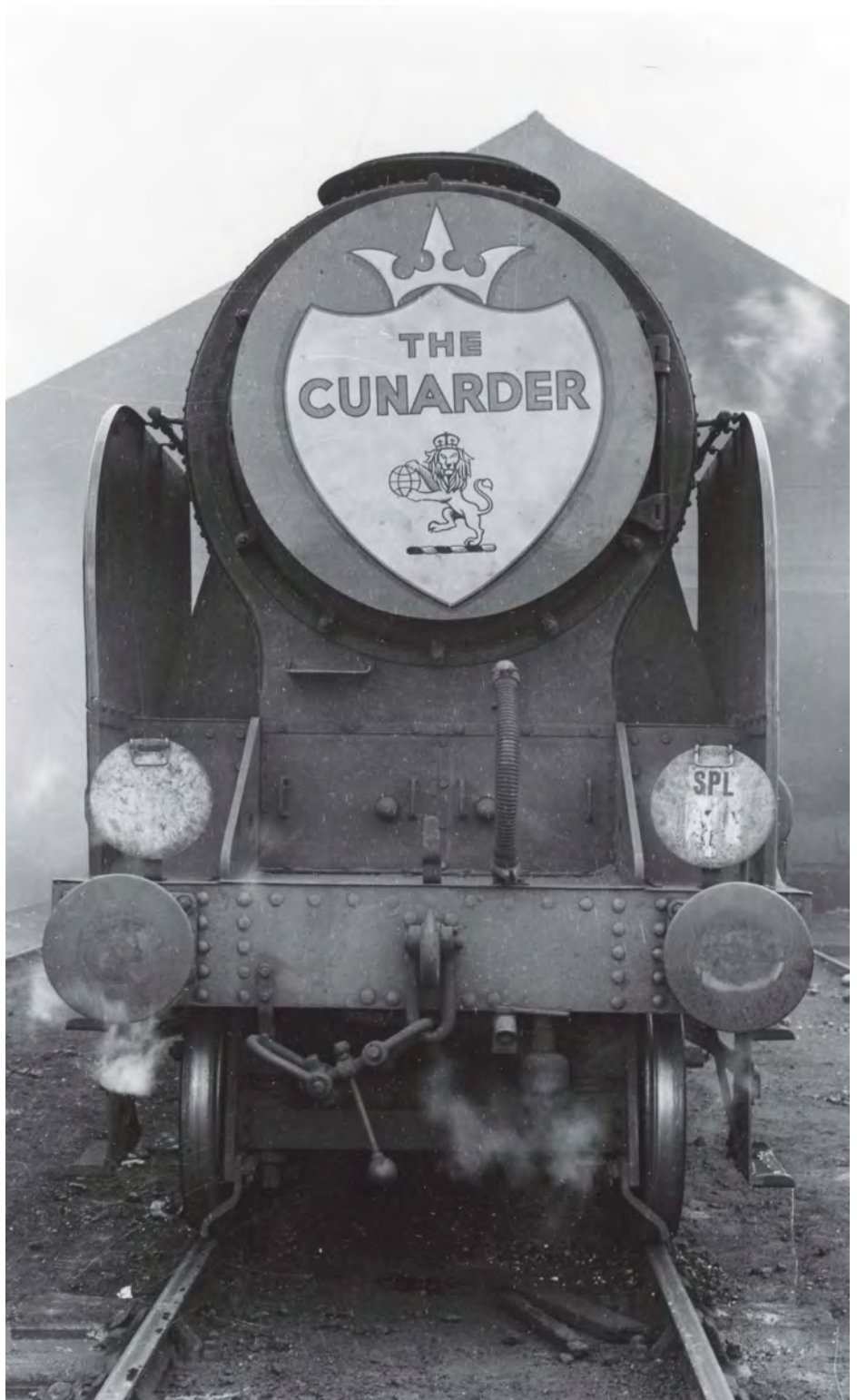
Tom Rayner relates a 'scary' incident after 'The Cunarder' boat train from Southampton docks arrived at London (Waterloo), with Eastleigh shed's Bob Radford and Harry Tizzard on the footplate.

Until air travel became established in the late 1950s, there was really only one way to travel the world and that was on board the great ocean liners. Luxury and elegance were the hallmarks of these beautiful ships, and none equalled the transatlantic liners in terms of size and glamour. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of people, including politicians, film stars and the cream of society, crossed the Atlantic on these floating palaces, and for many this period of our maritime history was the golden age of travel which will never be seen again. The railway played an important part in this operation because boat trains were run to connect with the arrival or departure of the principal liners, and since most docked at Southampton it was inevitable that the Southern Region ran the lion's share of these services.

From the early 1950s many of the boat trains received a name and one of the first was 'The Cunarder' – this was the title given to the all-Pullman trains frequently used for first class passengers sailing on the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*. Other titled trains soon followed, such as the 'Statesman', the 'Holland American', and the 'Union Castle Express', but in the eyes of many, the all-Pullman 'Cunarder' was the best!

Incoming boat trains were usually worked by Eastleigh footplatemen, who would run down to the docks light engine, where their train would be waiting. They would hook on, and then make their way at a very slow speed, round the tight bends leading from Southampton's Ocean Terminal to the dock gates. Here they would cross Canute Road, controlled by crossing keepers and a flagman, before running past Terminus station and the adjoining South Western Hotel, and soon after join the main line from Southampton (Central) and pick up speed for the journey to London.

On arriving at Waterloo, 'The Cunarder' would usually run into platform 11, alongside the station's cab road, where it would come to rest with its engine just short of the buffer stops. Porters would be waiting near the barrier to unload the passengers' trunks and cases from the luggage vans, while in the background would be that great cacophony of sound that was so typical of Waterloo and the other great London termini. There would be light music and announcements coming from the station's public address system, the rattle of an incoming electric train or the sound of slamming carriage doors, the noise of a guard's whistle, and then the roar from the exhaust of a tank engine as it struggled to keep its feet in helping an express set out on its journey – smoke and steam would mushroom upwards towards the glass roof of the building – while on the elegantly curved station concourse there would be a continual



As a general rule, Eastleigh footplatemen did not have a huge amount of main line express work, but in the 1950s the workings that they did have included the absolute cream of the Southern Region, the boat train traffic to and from Southampton docks, and the elite of the elite was 'The Cunarder', which included Pullman stock. Whoever designed this headboard, complete with the lion of the Cunard Steam-Ship Company, was making a statement at every arrival, but from this front end view, taken at Eastleigh shed on August 4, 1952, there is no chance of identifying the exact 'Lord Nelson'. In time all 16 of these Maunsell four-cylinder 4-6-0s were available from Eastleigh, but at this stage only Nos 30850-57 were Eastleigh assets, so it is likely to be one of those. Les Elsey



buzz as people hurried about their business. For some, there was little to do but wait, and for these people the restaurants, the buffets, and the W H Smith bookstalls provided a welcome retreat. Groups of passengers could also be found studying the ever-changing arrivals and departures boards, while others waited by the News cinema at the southern end of the station to meet loved ones and friends. From time to time a motorized tractor hauling trolleys would add to the pandemonium as it wound its way through the throng of people, and there seemed to be hustle and bustle everywhere, although amid all this there was still an underlying sense of order and efficiency.

Back on platform 11, with the arrival of 'The Cunarder', expensively dressed first class passengers could be found preparing to alight from their train as porters rushed forward to help them with their luggage but, just

Having prepared their steed at Eastleigh shed, the six-mile run to the old docks at Southampton was undertaken, with Canute Road level crossing seen here in June 1958 as Eastleigh-allocated 'Lord Nelson' class No 30862 Lord Collingwood enters the docks – it is running light engine to join the 'Brittany Express' up boat service. The docks were created by the London & South Western Railway and were then in Southern Railway hands until the breaking up of railway assets under nationalisation – the British Transport Commission had five executives, to cover railways, London Transport, docks and inland waterways, road transport, and hotels, the established joined-up thinking of integrated services immediately becoming vulnerable post-1948. Note that the crossing is manned but there are no gates across the road, while just out of view on the far side to the right is Southampton's original London & Southampton Railway terminus of 1840, its hotel being an 1872 L&SWR addition. Colour-Rail.com/BRS624

Another 'Lord Nelson', No 30857 Lord Howe, has arrived in the old docks from Eastleigh and now stands at the head of its train, the huge engine dwarfed by the Ocean Terminal, ready to take out 'The Cunarder' in 1956, the headboard by this time less imposing, and complete with a backdrop of a Cunard funnel – red with a black top. As with the many shipping companies using Southampton, British Railways met the incoming ships – the RMS Queen Elizabeth and RMS Queen Mary in the case of the Cunard Steam-Ship Company's New York-Cherbourg-Southampton service – the disembarking passengers immediately passing from ship to train and then being transported to London. The stock at the head of the train is for luggage, and in the distance are the Pullman vehicles synonymous with this service. Opened in 1950, the Ocean Terminal rather undersells itself from this angle, but inside it was an art deco-inspired wonder. It was built specifically for the 'Queens' and the other trans-Atlantic liners. P B Whitehouse/Colour-Rail.com/BRS995





At the beck and call of the various shipping companies, to match their schedules and soak up any delays at sea or at the port and offer a seamless service, in the mid-1950s the Eastleigh-based 'Lord Nelson' fleet was on hand and generally held sway on the best boat train work, with lesser 4-6-0s, and later an increasing number of Pacifics, getting action on an 'as required' basis. This May 8, 1959 train is thought to be an up troop special for the Royal Engineers – the locomotive is 'Lord Nelson' No 30863 Lord Rodney and it is passing through Eastleigh on the up through road. By February 1950 the Eastleigh 'Lord Nelsons' accounted for half the fleet, and three more, including Lord Rodney, were transferred in from Bournemouth in June 1956, followed by two from Nine Elms in June 1958, and finally the three remaining engines made the Bournemouth to Eastleigh move in November 1959. Colin Boocock

The doyen of its class, No 30850 Lord Nelson heads an up train through Basingstoke. New in September 1926, this 4-6-0 was transferred to Eastleigh shed in the first week of January 1949, and it would see out its career there, finally being withdrawn on August 18, 1962, but destined for preservation. Although less likely to be on regular express work, this was not a case of being 'put out to grass' as there was no shortage of work for fast and powerful engines in regard to Southampton docks, be it passenger boat trains or perishable traffic bound for Nine Elms. In the 1953-56 period Lord Nelson managed 117,061 miles between general overhauls, and only the 'Schools' and 'King Arthurs' were bettering that. A Lemaître multiple jet blastpipe and exhaust was fitted by Bulleid, Lord Nelson first entering traffic in this form in June 1939, and it did improve steaming, albeit the class gained a reputation as indifferent steamers in their early days and perhaps never quite shook it off – amongst those that appreciated them was Bert Hooker at Nine Elms, but the lengthy firebox must have been daunting to a young fireman fresh on the job. Colour-Rail.com/7170b



occasionally, things did not go quite according to plan, as was the case on the day that Eastleigh footplateman Harry Tizzard recalls when as a young fireman he found himself on the footplate of the locomotive hauling this prestigious train.

Journey's end is the buffer stops at Waterloo for 'Eastleigh Arthur' or 'N15' class No 30451 Sir Lamorak on April 28, 1962. New in June 1925, the Basingstoke-allocated 4-6-0 is in its last months of use and appears to have some admirers. Withdrawn in June 1962, it is likely to be on a semi-fast train from Basingstoke, but through much of the 1950s the very capable 'N15s' were regularly used on boat train duties such as those for Union Castle Line. Uncoupling is underway, and a light feather of steam drifts up from the safety valves, so the fireman was both helping himself by not loading up the firebox unnecessarily and is able to conform to the strict 'no blowing-off' rules of the terminus. Beyond the engine, a huge poster above platforms 10 and 11 reads 'Welcome to Britain – BOAC Cunard', advertising what proved to be a relatively short-lived Cunard airline operation that ceased in 1966. The longest platform was No 11 at 860ft, hence its use by boat trains. James Harrold/Transport Treasury



Other than the minutes spent during the ship-to-train interchange at the Ocean Terminal in Southampton, the hubbub of Waterloo station was the abrupt introduction to Britain that many ocean-going travellers experienced – with the everyday commuters, knowing exactly where to go, weaving among those who didn't, while the cacophony of slamming doors and the collective din of railway noise was amplified in a theatre of echo. Seen from the east side of the terminus, where third-rail suburban services dominate, this scene dates from October 17, 1959. Above the bookstand at the end of platforms 4 and 5 is a huge poster advertising Co-operative stores, and beyond it we glimpse two terminated steam-hauled services. T B Owen/Colour-Rail.com/BRS1944



Few railway enthusiasts took photographs on the concourse areas of the London termini, preferring the relative peace of the platforms, be it in the rarely well lit (for film stock of the 1950s and 1960s) area upon termination or the daylight and peace that could be found, most likely among like-minded souls, at the platform end. Running the gauntlet in the spring of 1961 we can thank George Heiron for his insight in recording the Waterloo departures board, the fashions and advertising catching our eye today as we look back at a scene from nearly 60 years ago. George Heiron/Transport Treasury

As Harry recalls, Bob Radford ('Raddie') and I were working the up 'Cunarder' one morning, carrying the *Queen Elizabeth's* first class passengers from Southampton to London. It was an all-Pullman train, and we had a 'Lord Nelson' that had been specially cleaned up for the occasion, so everything was looking very posh indeed. We had a lovely

Looking east, towards the platforms where steam was operating, a new flood of commuters make haste across this view as they make for Bakerloo or Northern line Underground services or the British Railways-owned Waterloo & City line to Bank. The determined stride of most reveals that refreshments are more likely to be taken by those killing time prior to departure, while waiting for their train and its allocated platform to be called, rather than those incoming. The refreshments are certainly in the thick of the action, and extra stock is on hand in a wicker trolley.

George Heiron/Transport Treasury





Known by local railwaymen as 'carriage bopping', there was a constant coming and going of coaching stock between the yards at Clapham Junction and Waterloo, and in the late 1950s and early 1960s this demanding work, Drummond 'M7' 0-4-4T turns of late, largely passed to modern 2-6-2Ts and 2-6-4Ts – BR Standard '3MT' No 82026 is pictured at the end of Platform 10 while watering on May 22, 1965. On these turns, tank engines were called upon to haul full express rakes, and smart timing was required – the journeys were just less than four miles but much gusto was delivered. In addition, trapped at the buffer stops for some time, the fireman needed to manage his fire to have just the right amount of steam, not too much to 'blow-off' but enough to be ready to aid the departure of the stock brought in, giving banking assistance for the length of the platform. The engine was not coupled for this, and so, having given rear-end help to the train engine, came to a halt at the end of the platform, with the train disappearing into the distance. Once the road was clear the tank engine then cleared the platform and was called to its next duty, an empty stock departure or a light engine move to either Clapham Junction or the nearby dock. L Rowe/Colour-Rail.com/10287

trip up, and 'Raddie' was really chuffed because we ran into Waterloo three or four minutes early. I jumped down, unhooked, and put a tail lamp on the front of the engine and a disc board on the back, so that we were ready for the run back to Nine Elms shed.

Suddenly 'Raddie' said, "All right, I think we will have a drop of water", so I climbed up over the coal to the back of the tender and opened the lid of the filler hole. 'Raddie' handed up the pipe to me; it was a small bore pipe on platform 11 but, phew, it was powerful. The pipe started to vibrate as the water pressure began building up inside, and I started shaking as well as I struggled to keep it under control. Somehow I managed to pull the lid over the pipe so that it helped to keep it steady

in the filler hole, and then, looking across at the steam gauge, I suddenly thought to myself, cripes, she's going to blow off in a minute. Blowing off was a cardinal sin within the confines of Waterloo station. I shouted down to 'Raddie', "That thing is going to blow off!"

"Well, put the injector on," he replied. "Well, ease the water pressure a bit," I shouted back at him.

"Oh, all right," he said, and then a few moments later, he shouted, "I can't, the handle's stuck!"

By this time I was convinced she was going to blow off, although I could not understand why because I'd run the fire down pretty low. I thought to myself, well that's it, I've got to go, so I flew over the top of the coal

to get back into the cab when all of a sudden there was this almighty 'whoosh' behind me. I looked round and there was the water pipe pointing up in the air and snaking about as it cascaded water all over the platform, while passengers and station staff were flying about everywhere trying to get out of the way.

By now I had got back on to the footplate and it was only then that I remembered that the steam gauge on the fireman's side was slightly on the angle. This meant that from where I had been standing on top of the tender, the needle appeared to be right over on the 220 mark, whereas in fact we only had about 160psi. There had been no danger of blowing off at all. After hesitating for a moment, I plucked up courage and peered out over the side of the cab. To my relief I discovered that 'Raddie' had finally managed to shut off the water, but not before the platform by the barrier had been completely flooded and several passengers almost drowned in the process!

Boiler management at Waterloo was doubtless all the more unpredictable in the closing months of steam, with a marked difference between good and bad locomotives, limited maintenance and the concept of crews having their 'own locomotive' long since a thing of the past. On June 5, 1967 a good head of steam is certainly available on Bulleid 'Battle of Britain' class Pacific No 34090, so perhaps it is just as well that it is by now un-named – it might not be seemly to have Sir Eustace Missenden, Southern Railway breaking the strict noise rules at one of the Southern termini. R Siviter/Colour-Rail.com/97469a



Having been 'ticked off' at the buffer stops, one can only imagine that driver Radford and fireman Tizzard were more than glad to escape the confines of the terminus once their stock was released, although what the next move was for their 'Lord Nelson' is unknown. On the occasion seen here, September 6, 1961, No 30862 Lord Collingwood has just been released and is now being called upon to shunt into platform 9 and couple on to Drummond 'M7' class 0-4-4T No 30321, a move most likely brought about by the need to limit congestion between the station and Nine Elms shed, one light engine move being far more desirable than two. The shedcode plate reads '71A' for Eastleigh, home for No 30862 from June 1956 until its withdrawal on October 6, 1962. James Harrold Transport Treasury



Poor old 'Raddie' was standing there with a long face, looking very miserable and dejected, although most of the passengers had taken it quite well, with some actually laughing because they could see the funny side of what had happened. Just as things were quieting down, this little bloke with a bowler hat came rushing up – I think he was one of the assistant station masters or something like that and they always had a habit of coming out of the woodwork and descending on you like flies if anything went wrong.

"What's your driver's name?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I replied, not wishing to get 'Raddie' into trouble. However, it didn't do any good because by the time we got back to Eastleigh, word had reached there already. A large notice had been put up on the board in the enginemen's cabin stating, "Whilst taking water at Waterloo, enginemen will be in attendance at all times."

That wasn't quite the end of the story, however, because a few days later one of the Eastleigh inspectors came up to me and said that although all the passengers had been very good about what had happened, it had cost the railway nearly £400 in dry cleaning expenses! As he walked off, he said to me with a smile "You certainly picked a good'un there didn't you – the 'Cunarder' of all trains!"



Once the ocean liners were in port, a cleaning, refuelling and restocking process began in readiness for the next outgoing passengers, and henceforth the down 'Cunarder' operated when one of the 'Queens' was heading back across the Atlantic. Although the ocean liner business was by now at the mercy of the new opportunities of air travel, into the mid-1960s the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* were still loading to an average of over 1,000 passengers on each sailing. With the prospect of a voyage in hand for its passengers, Bulleid Light Pacific No 34083 605 Squadron is recorded at Basingstoke with the down 'Cunarder' on September 5, 1963 – the last of the active 'Lord Nelsons', No 30853 *Sir Richard Grenville*, was withdrawn in the week ending March 3, 1962. W Taylor

Sailing since 1936, and the 'Blue Riband' holder for trans-Atlantic speed in its youth, the *RMS Queen Mary* once crossed from North America in less than four days, but when this view was recorded in 1967 its days were numbered – the ship would be pensioned off on December 9, 1967. The locomotive sporting 'The Cunarder' headboard in this busy view at the Ocean Terminal, Eastleigh shed's 'Battle of Britain' No 34090, was also on borrowed time, stripped of nameplates and destined for withdrawal at the end of Southern steam on July 9, 1967. At the end of 1963 it was reported that Cunard was unhappy with the service offered by BR, having been complaining for nigh on two years, citing dirty and slow trains, and stating that the company was considering the withdrawal of its nameboard from these services. In response, BR conceded that there had been isolated lapses but asserted that on the whole the service was "very good", and stated that "the cars are cleaned at each end of the 1½ hour journey, and are not used on other passenger runs." Over two years later, it is clear that someone has pappered over the cracks, but the state of the Pacific leaves much to be desired. G Parry Collection/Colour-Rail.com/313507





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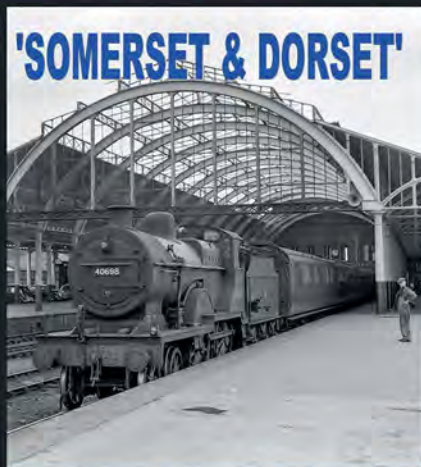
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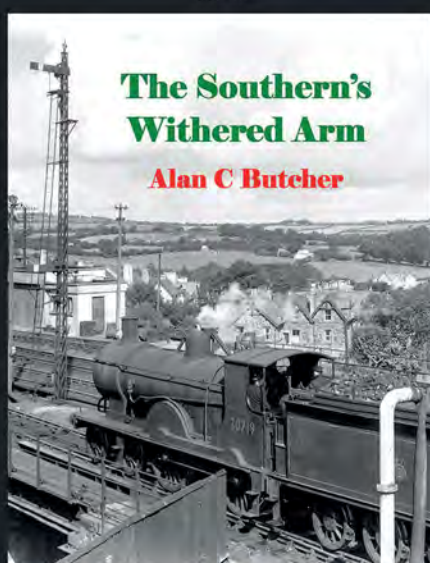
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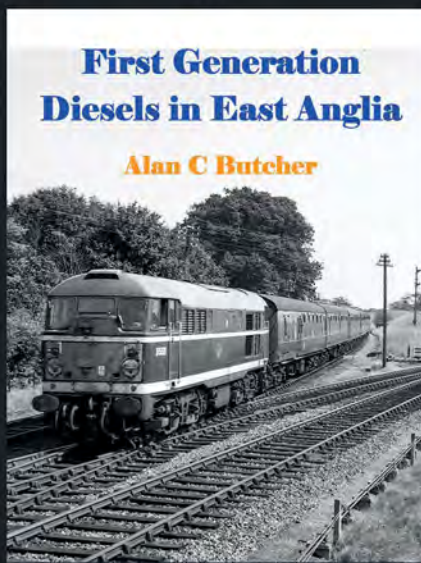


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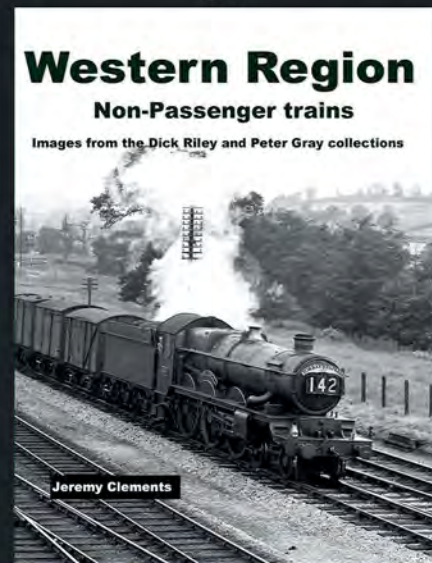


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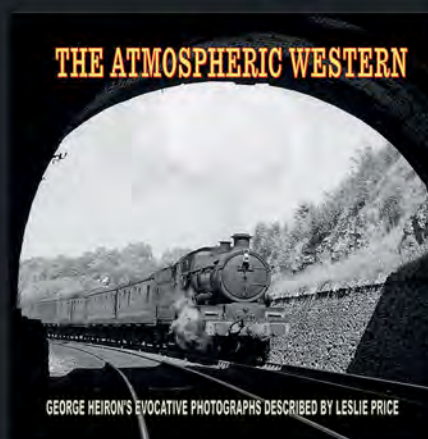


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Steam Days at Bridgwater



Stanley Jenkins investigates the two lines that served this Somerset town – the GWR's Bristol to Exeter main line and the branch from Edington on the Somerset & Dorset Joint line from Evercreech Junction, in addition to providing details of the important docks area at Bridgwater.

Bridgwater is a town and coastal port on the river Parrett in north Somerset. The *Domesday Book* reveals that in 1086, Brugie was a relatively large settlement with around 30 households, which implies a population of about 150. The manor contained 100 acres of woodland, 30 acres of pasture, one mill and land for ten ploughs, while the landlord was Walter de Douie. At the start of the 13th century a charter, granted by King John, allowed the Lord of the Manor, William Brewer, to build a castle and levy tolls

GWR 'Castle' class 4-6-0 No 5033 Broughton Castle races south through Dunball with a Manchester to Plymouth express on Saturday, September 20, 1947. Just 2½ miles north of Bridgwater, there were no public goods sidings at this station but, on the left, a short branch line ran to a wharf alongside the river Parrett. The flat crossing in the foreground links the wharf branch to a cement works on the east side of the main line; the flat crossing would be removed in November 1958.
P Short/Kidderminster Railway Museum

for fairs, markets, and use of the bridge across the river, and the borough then grew greatly. Rebuilt in the first half of the 17th century, the castle was occupied by the Royalists under Sir Hugh Wyndham during the Civil War, but the outer suburbs were stormed by the New Model Army on July 20, 1645 and, having been subjected to a heavy artillery bombardment, the Cavaliers meekly surrendered just three days later. Mention of the Civil War serves as a reminder that Bridgwater was the birthplace of Robert Blake, Cromwell's Admiral, who achieved remarkable success against the Spanish and Dutch fleets during the 1650s; his birthplace now houses Bridgwater museum. In spite of damage sustained during the Civil War, Bridgwater prospered during the 18th century, and by 1801 its population had

reached 6,600, rising to over 10,000 by 1841, and to around 16,000 by the end of the Victorian period; by that time it had become the most important port in Somerset.

In pre-railway days, the transport needs of Bridgwater and the surrounding area were satisfied by inland waterways such as the river Parrett and the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal of January 3, 1827. The river Parrett was tidal as far upstream as Langport, while 1836 saw an Act obtained for improvements to the river to make it fully navigable beyond Langport to Thorney. The scheme was completed by 1840, although by that time the rapid spread of the railway network was posing a severe threat to the local waterways.

The Bristol & Exeter Railway

The first public railway to serve the Bridgwater area was the Bristol & Exeter Railway (B&ER), which was incorporated on May 19, 1836 with powers for constructing a line commencing at Bristol "in a certain field called Temple Mead" and terminating at Exeter, with branches to Tiverton and Bridgwater docks. To pay for their scheme the promoters were empowered to raise £1,000,000 in shares and a further £500,000 by

The constant enemy of any waterway in the Somerset levels is silt, and on August 12, 1959, Brunel-influenced dredger *Bertha* of 1844 is tied up between duties near the warehouses in the northeast corner of the floating harbour at Bridgwater. These facilities were built by the canal company but soon passed into the ownership of the Bristol & Exeter Railway and were subsequently rail-connected.

G E S Parker/Kidderminster Railway Museum



Bridgwater lies at the first bridging point of the tidal river Parrett. The tide extends some 19 miles inland to Oathe but without canalizing it was only navigable as far as Bridgwater, which subsequently developed as a port in the 14th century. The Bridgwater to Taunton Canal opened in 1827 and was extended through the town to a floating harbour in 1841. Dunball wharf, at the outfall of the King's Sedgemoor drain, opened three years later. A ridge of high ground known as the Polden Hills lie to the north and divide the Somerset levels in two. It was into this environment that first the Bristol & Exeter Railway and then the Bridgwater Railway arrived in the 19th century, this Ordnance Survey map illustrating the town, its waterways and railways at 1956, the Bristol & Exeter line passing on a north-south alignment, while the Bridgwater Railway is seen heading northeast. Crown Copyright

loans. With Isambard Kingdom Brunel as its engineer, the railway was envisaged as an important broad gauge route but relations with the neighbouring Great Western Railway were not amicable. Nevertheless, it was agreed in 1840 that, when opened, the Exeter line would be worked by the GWR as an integral part of the broad gauge system. Construction of the eastern section of this main line presented relatively few engineering problems and it was ceremonially opened as far as Bridgwater on Tuesday, June 1, 1841, the inaugural directors' special being hauled by GWR 'Firefly' class 2-2-2 *Fireball*.

The *Bristol Mercury* reported that, on arrival at Bridgwater, the 'first train' was welcomed "by the splendid band of the West Somerset Yeomanry, arrayed in full uniform." It appeared that virtually the whole of the town had turned out to witness the celebrations, and "the huzzaing, the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and the joyous countenances of all assembled added to the pleasing excitement of the scene." Regular public services commenced on June 14, 1841, on which day a short branch line from Weston Junction to Weston-super-Mare was also brought into use.

The B&ER line was extended southwards from Bridgwater to Taunton on July 1, 1842, and eight months later a further extension allowed trains to reach Wellington from May 1, 1843. Beyond there, the need to tunnel through the Blackdown Hills delayed completion of the line until May 1, 1844 when the Bristol & Exeter Railway was completed throughout, the event being celebrated by the running of an inaugural directors' special from London (Paddington) to Exeter, followed by a great banquet in the goods shed at Exeter station.

At the outset, the Great Western Railway worked trains for the Bristol & Exeter Railway, but the underlying hostility that existed between these companies intensified when it became known that the GWR was planning a more direct route to Exeter that would pass to the south of Bristol. Inevitably, this alienated the largely Bristol-based supporters of the B&ER and so on May 1, 1849 the company began to work its own trains as an independent concern. This



situation lasted for 27 years, until the Bristol & Exeter company was amalgamated with the GWR in 1876, under the provisions of an Act of Parliament obtained that year.

To the west, under Isambard Kingdom Brunel the South Devon Railway set out to link Exeter and Plymouth by trains operating on the atmospheric system, but once this notion was abandoned in September 1848 the railway pressed on with reaching Plymouth, which was achieved on April 2, 1849, allowing early establishment of a West of England main line passenger service of around five workings each-way between Plymouth, Exeter, and Bristol, and the level of service did not change much in terms of frequency for several years, although there was a steady improvement in train speeds. Further incentive for improvement came in 1876 when the GWR secured full control of the main line between Paddington, Plymouth, and Penzance. The next milestone in the evolution of the main line through Bridgwater came in the early 1890s when the Great Western broad gauge was abolished – it was decided that the West of England main line and its broad-gauge branch lines would be narrowed in one huge operation on the weekend of May 20-22, 1892, and to facilitate this massive engineering feat about 5,000 workmen were transported to the West Country.

The July 1906 opening of an ambitious 'cut-off' scheme between Westbury and Taunton, by completion of a new main line from Castle Cary to Curry Rivell Junction, resulted in the diversion of many London (Paddington) to Penzance services away from Bristol and the northern section of the former B&ER main line, on to the shorter route via Reading, the Berks & Hants line and Westbury, but the loss of traffic between

Bristol, Bridgwater and Taunton would to some extent be mitigated by a growth in long-distance cross-country traffic to and from the West Country and populous industrial cities such as Birmingham and Wolverhampton. In 1938 the number of main line passenger trains calling at Bridgwater amounted to six up and seven down workings, the best London timings being 3 hours 32 minutes for the 151½ mile journey between Bridgwater and Paddington. By the early 1960s there were around ten express or semi-fast workings between Bridgwater and Bristol (Temple Meads), including through services to and from destinations such as Bradford and Cardiff.

Origins of the

Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway (S&DJR)

On June 17, 1852 an undertaking known as the Somerset Central Railway was incorporated with powers for construction of a railway from Highbridge wharf to Glastonbury. This new rail link opened for public traffic on August 28, 1854, and on July 30, 1855 the supporters of the scheme obtained Parliamentary consent for two extensions – west from Highbridge to Burnham-on-Sea, and northeast from Glastonbury to Wells – these opening on May 3, 1858 and March 15, 1859 respectively. Meanwhile, the Dorset Central Railway (DCR) had been formed to construct a railway to Blandford from Wimborne, the latter on the London & South Western Railway (L&SWR). Although a separate concern, the DCR was intimately connected with the Somerset Central Railway and in the next few months the two companies obtained further powers for connecting lines between Glastonbury and Blandford – these were



The broad gauge origins of the Bristol & Exeter Railway station at Bridgwater are clear in this view looking north in 1957. On the left, outside the station is the Railway Hotel, which opened shortly after the line in 1841. With a connection to the docks and riverside wharves, and the number of rail-served factories and businesses increasing in and around the town, the yards and facilities to the north of the station expanded accordingly and a small marshalling yard was located just beyond the large goods shed seen in the distance. Lens of Sutton

finally completed on August 31, 1863, on which day a new cross-country route was brought into use between Highbridge, Glastonbury and Wimborne, for Poole and Bournemouth thanks to running rights on L&SWR metals.

By this time the Dorset Central and Somerset Central railways had amalgamated, on September 1, 1862 to form the aptly named Somerset & Dorset Railway. The S&DR soon began to develop its straggling system, an attempt to establish better links with Bristol resulting in the company seeking Parliamentary consent for a northern extension between Evercreech and Bath, this opening on July 20, 1874. The new line was now part of an important through route between the Midlands and Bournemouth, and in 1875 the Somerset & Dorset system was taken over jointly by the Midland and London & South Western railway companies – from this time onwards through traffic between the north of England, Midlands and the South Coast began to flourish.

The Bridgwater Railway

Although Bridgwater had been served by rail since 1841, many of the local traders and residents were extremely dissatisfied with the monopolistic and allegedly poor services provided by the Bristol & Exeter Railway. The formation of the Somerset Central Railway led to suggestions that Bridgwater might be served by the new line, but Highbridge, a less important town about six miles to the north, was chosen as the initial western terminus of that route; it was initially broad gauge and used B&ER trains, with mixed gauge track laid from 1862. In 1866 plans for a branch line to Bridgwater from Shapwick (on what was by now the S&DR) were thwarted by opposition from the Bristol & Exeter Railway, while 1874/75 saw a scheme put forward for a branch line to Bridgwater from Edington, again on the former Somerset Central line. The S&DR supported the proposal and it was passed unanimously by the House of Commons in 1875. However, the bill failed to

reach the House of Lords as the S&DR had been obliged to withdraw its support as a result of financial difficulties, these being brought about by its commitment to the Evercreech to Bath extension.

The supporters of the Bridgwater Railway were nevertheless determined to press on with their scheme, and in June 1880 the *Bristol Mercury* reported that a “numerously attended and influential public meeting of the inhabitants” had been held in the town hall at Bridgwater to discuss the provision of increased railway accommodation for the country lying to the east of Bridgwater. It was agreed that the best facilities would be obtained by forming a new connection with the Somerset & Dorset line, either from Glastonbury or from Edington, as proposed in the Bridgwater Railway Bill of 1875.

Accordingly, in November 1880 the promoters gave formal notice that an application would be made to Parliament in the ensuing session for leave to bring in a bill seeking consent for the construction of a railway, “with all proper and convenient stations, sidings, junctions, buildings, approaches and other works,” from Edington to Bridgwater. In the event, the scheme experienced various problems, and although the bill was read for the second time, on February 28, 1881, it was withdrawn in the following month because “one of the two powerful companies” that had agreed to support the proposed railway had “refused to afford the necessary material guarantee for the working of the traffic after the construction of the line.”

Undeterred by these repeated failures, the promoters prepared a new bill for submission to Parliament in the 1882 session. As on previous occasions, the proposed line was described as a railway commencing at Edington “by a junction with the main line of the Somerset & Dorset Railway at or near the westerly end of the passenger platform at the Edington Road station on that railway” and terminating in the parish of Bridgwater, “in a field in the occupation of William Brice,

Alfred Garret Baron, and Richard Kenwick Lloyd, or one of them which field is situate at or near the junctions of the main road from Bridgwater to Bristol, and the main road from Bridgwater to Glastonbury and Wells.”

Having passed successfully through all stages of the complex Parliamentary process, the Bridgwater [sic] Railway Bill received the Royal Assent on August 18, 1882 and the promoters were thereby empowered to construct the long hoped for railway from Edington to Bridgwater. The authorized capital was £135,000 in shares with a further £45,000 on mortgage, while the London & South Western Railway, by then a joint lessee of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, agreed to lease the line and work it in return for half of the gross traffic receipts. Having obtained their Act of Incorporation after so many frustrating setbacks and delays, the supporters of the Bridgwater Railway were understandably keen to begin construction, but financial problems and other difficulties delayed the scheme, an extension of time for completion of the works being necessary in 1886, while a further Act of Parliament was obtained on August 10, 1888 in order that the company could issue £60,000 of its authorized capital in the form of 4½% preference stock. In the meantime, a contract for construction of the line was awarded on March 13, 1888, and the first sod was ceremonially cut by Alderman A Peace (a Director of the company and a former mayor of Bridgwater) on Tuesday, April 24. A great deal of preliminary work had already been carried out, and the major works were soon in full progress, the contractors being Messrs Cutbill, Son & de Lungo, while the engineers were Messrs Wells-Owen & Elwes of Westminster Chambers, London, a partnership between Richard Gervase Elwes and David Wells-Owen.

The authorized route ran south-westwards, negotiating a ridge of high ground known as the Polden hills before descending to the levels again – there would be several over-bridges or under-bridges, together with a



The compact S&DJR-operated terminus at Bridgwater is captured in the era prior to 1930, with the passenger carriages, still painted in lined Prussian blue livery, being cleaned in the departure platform. The canopy has an L&SWR appearance and the station buildings are constructed of local brick, with Italianate style windows. The station master's house, on the left, was built in a similar style but does appear to be in danger of disappearing behind lush vegetation at this time. Beyond, on the other side of the station access road can be seen the saw-tooth roof profile of the timber storage sheds that lined both sides of the GWR's docks branch, these passing at right angles to the lines in the foreground.

deep cutting near the summit of the line at Bawdrip. Generally speaking, the works proceeded without incident, although in September 1888 a railway labourer named George Chilwell, aged 36, was killed by a fall of earth while working in the cutting at Bawdrip. It was reported that his fellow navvies had "generously subscribed £11 or £12 for the widow of the deceased, and the contractors had made this up to £20, besides undertaking the expenses connecting with the funeral."

Ready for its Board of Trade inspection by July 1890, the inspecting officer refused to pass the line for public traffic until the junction at Edington had been modified so that branch trains did not have to run over the up main line in order to reach the bay platform – it was agreed that this would be accomplished by bringing the goods yard access line up to passenger standards by the addition of a facing point lock, trap points, and ground discs.

Despite this minor setback, it was decided that the line would be ceremonially opened on Thursday, July 17, 1890. The great day was celebrated in typical Victorian fashion by the running of a special train that conveyed the Bridgwater Railway directors and officials and their invited guests over the new line from Edington. Unfortunately, heavy rain began to fall during the morning and the inclement weather continued unabated throughout the day. Notwithstanding the abysmal weather, a large and enthusiastic crowd assembled in the vicinity of the new station to witness the arrival of the official 'first train', while the

The weather turned ugly on opening day in 1890, with torrential rain doing its best to spoil the related celebrations typical of the era. The same inclement weather is apparent in 1905 as S&DJR Johnson 0-4-4T No 32 awaits departure with a service to Edington Junction. This locomotive was supplied by the Avonside Engine Co Ltd in December 1877, and it was re-boilered three times before being re-numbered as No 52 in August 1928, becoming No 1230 when absorbed into LMS stock in 1930. That longevity came to an end when it was withdrawn in June 1946 but a better innings than that of the Bridgwater branch itself.

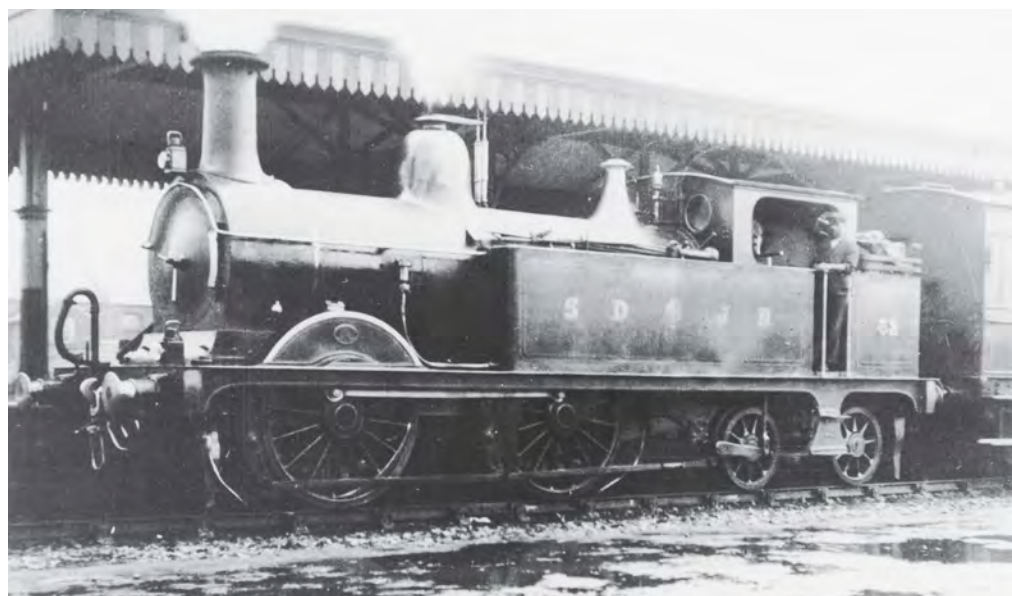
town was decorated with flags and bunting, a triumphal arch that had been erected near the station being much-admired.

The inaugural special arrived in Bridgwater at 1.30pm and was officially welcomed by a number of influential gentlemen, including the mayors of Bridgwater, Taunton, Glastonbury, and Wells, and the town clerk of Bridgwater who read out an official welcoming address. Colonel Campbell of the L&SWR and Henry A P Bouverie (chairman of the Bridgwater Railway) both responded on behalf of their respective companies, expressing their belief that 'the new line would be a very great benefit to the trade and commerce of the town, putting it in direct communication with the Midland and L&SWR systems'. Carriages were waiting outside the station, and the official party then proceeded to the town hall where a 'sumptuous luncheon' awaited them. The mayor presided, over 200 people attended, and the meal was followed by the usual round of toasts and speeches, after which the directors and their guests enjoyed a trip over the new railway from Bridgwater to Glastonbury and back.

Public services began on Monday, July 21, the necessary changes having been put into effect at Edington Junction. The new line was single-track throughout, although the bridges and formation were wide enough to

accommodate double-track. There was just one intermediate station, at Cossington, but this was not a block post and the line was worked as one section between Edington and Bridgwater. The Edington Junction to Bridgwater line served a remote rural area and its train services were always relatively modest. In pre-grouping days the line was served by semi-fast trains to and from Templecombe, these covering the intervening 35 miles in about 66 minutes and providing connections for London (Waterloo) via the L&SWR's main line. The 1892 timetables reveal that there were nine trains each way, falling to seven up and eight down workings by 1903. In the early years of the 20th century the branch line was used as a testing ground for Alfred Whitaker's tablet exchange apparatus, which enabled single-line tablets to be exchanged at speeds in excess of 60mph. However the equipment was removed when the trials were completed, the Edington to Bridgwater branch settling down to a somewhat impecunious existence as a country branch line.

In effect, the branch was worked as an integral part of the S&DJR from inception but the Bridgwater Railway lost its nominal independence before the grouping by Act of 1921 when absorbed by the London & South Western Railway, which in turn became part of the Southern Railway from January 1, 1923 when absorbed by the successor to the





Passengers at Edington Junction await the arrival of a down train in 1932 as an S&DJR Johnson 0-6-0 'Scottie Goods' shunts the Bridgwater branch train in the distance. The train is standing on what had been installed as a goods line but prior to the opening of the branch it was upgraded to passenger status at the behest of the railway inspectorate. This link gave Bridgwater trains a direct run from the bay platform to the branch without the need to run over a short section of the up loop. Goods wagons occupy the branch platform, so presumably there is more work to do before the engine runs-round the coaches and shunts into the bay, ready for the return to Bridgwater.

From the elevated vantage point of the cattle dock, photographer Cam Camwell records Midland 0-4-4T No 58072 awaiting departure from the bay platform at Edington Junction in the final years of the branch passenger service. By now, through trains to and from Templecombe forming a connection with London trains were a distant memory and just a single LMS coach was required to handle the custom on offer. An attempt to introduce operating economies here and on the Wells branch by the introduction of push-pull working in 1928 was short-lived and four of the five Johnson 0-4-4Ts – S&DJR Nos 30A, 31A, 32, 54 and 55 – fitted with the LMS vacuum system were withdrawn by 1932. The small loadings though of course made it easier to diagram some services as mixed trains conveying both passenger stock and goods wagons. W A Camwell/SLS Collection



London & South Western Railway, the Southern Railway. That company added Bawdrip Halt as a second intermediate stopping place from July 7, 1923. In July 1947, during the last summer of the 'Big Four', there were five up (westbound) and four down (eastbound) workings, with up trains from Edington Junction at 8.22am, 10.10am, 2.40pm, 5.15pm (Saturdays excepted), 5.38pm (Saturdays only), and 7.20pm, and down services from Bridgwater at 9.40am, 1.45pm, 4pm, and 6.40pm. The usual journey time was around 18 minutes for the 7¼ mile journey.

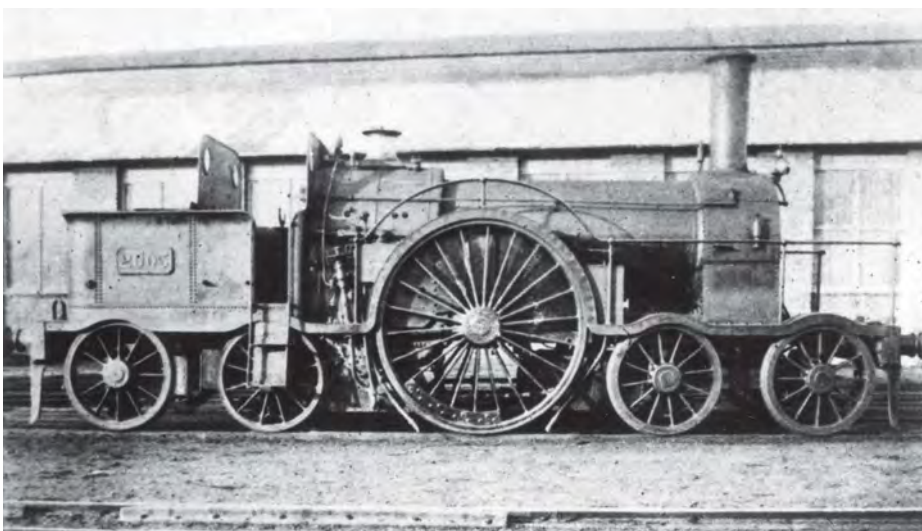
In common with many other country branch lines, the Edington to Bridgwater route suffered from road competition during the 1920s and 1930s and it came as no real

surprise when, in the early 1950s, British Railways decided to close the line to passenger traffic – it was announced that the railway would be shut with effect from Monday, December 1, 1952. As there were no Sunday services, the last passenger trains ran on Saturday, November 29, 1952 but goods trains continued to run over the branch for a further two years, until October 1954 when the line from Edington Junction to Bridgwater was closed to all traffic.

Motive power

Like other main lines, the Bristol & Exeter route through Bridgwater saw a great variety of motive power, ranging from the Gooch and Pearson tank engines of the mid-Victorian

period to the familiar Great Western 4-6-0s, 2-6-2Ts and 0-6-0PTs of more recent years. In broad gauge days, the Bristol & Exeter Railway was worked mainly by 4-2-4 well tanks, 4-4-0STs and 0-6-0 goods engines, many of which were designed by B&ER locomotive superintendent James Pearson. The standard 4-4-0ST design was a development of Daniel Gooch's 'Corsair' class of saddle tank, with 26 of these built for service on the B&ER by the Avonside Engine Company between 1855 and 1873. Pearson's 4-2-4 well tanks were designed for fast main line duties, for which purpose the original eight engines had 9ft diameter driving wheels. They were introduced in 1853 and withdrawn between 1868 and 1873 following the appearance of four very similar 4-2-4WTs with 8ft 10in driving wheels – remarkably, the driving wheels of these were unflanged, a feature that may have contributed to a derailment at Long Aston on July 27, 1876.



Bristol & Exeter Railway 4-2-4 No 2005 was built in 1862 and was the second of a pair of broad gauge engines constructed at the company's own workshops in Bristol with 7ft 6in driving wheels. In total there were 14 James Pearson designed 4-2-4 locomotives constructed with flange-less drivers between 1853-68, with the others having 9ft, and 8ft 10in diameter driving wheels. All passed to the GWR when the B&ER amalgamated with the GWR but had been withdrawn by 1885.

The engine involved was scrapped, and the three remaining 4-2-4WTs were rebuilt as conventional 4-2-2 tender engines. In this form they worked on the West of England main line until the very end of the broad gauge.

On a minor point of interest, the Bristol & Exeter Railway locomotives differed from their counterparts on other parts of the broad gauge system in that they did not carry names; they were, moreover, painted black rather than the more usual green. After the amalgamation of 1876 these engines were renumbered in the '2XXX' series and dispersed throughout the GWR's West Country system, many of the 4-4-0STs being sent to Devon and Cornwall as the Bristol & Exeter secondary routes were converted to standard gauge. The engines were maintained at Bristol, where the B&ER had established a locomotive works, whereas the rolling stock was built and maintained in a carriage and wagon works at Bridgwater, on the up side to the south of the station.

The introduction of steam sanding led to renewed interest in the concept of single-driver express locomotives. Accordingly, in 1891 William Dean introduced his celebrated '3001' class, the first 30 examples being built as 2-2-2s, although leading bogies were fitted after a derailment. The Dean Singles had 20in x 24in inside cylinders and were clearly intended to be flagship locomotives on the West of England main line. Although they were rapidly superseded by newly-built 4-4-0s, some of the Dean Singles remained at work on the Bristol & Exeter section until 1915.

At the end of the Victorian period the West of England main line was worked mainly by 4-4-0s and 0-6-0s, the 4-4-0s being employed on passenger work. A well-known 4-4-0 type seen in the area was the 'Bulldog'

class, which were in effect improved 'Dukes' with double-frames and 5ft 8in coupled wheels. The original 'Bulldogs' were introduced in 1898, and they were followed by a slightly modified group of 15 'Bird' class locomotives that had side bearing bogies but were otherwise similar to the original 'Bulldogs'. The 'City' class also deserve a special mention, these famous double-framed 4-4-0s being introduced in 1903 as an improved version of the slightly earlier 'Atbara' class. On May 9, 1904, *City of Truro*, then numbered 3440, achieved lasting fame when it was alleged to have reached a record speed of 102.4mph while descending Wellington bank, to the west of Taunton, with an up 'Ocean Mail' train between Plymouth and Paddington.

In general, the GWR soon favoured 4-6-0s for long-distance express passenger work, large engines of this kind appearing in the West of England for the first time in 1902 with the arrival of prototype 'Saint' No 100 *William Dean*. After two more prototypes, Nos 98 and 171, production of the two-cylinder 'Saint' class began in 1904, the 'Scott' series of 1905 notable in that, for evaluation of the best way forward, six were built as 4-6-0s and 13 as 4-4-2s, the latter being converted to 4-6-0 in 1912/13. These engines became familiar sights on the B&ER route, together with the four-cylinder 'Star' class 4-6-0s new between 1906 and 1923, and these in turn immediately led to the 'Castle' class 4-6-0s. Other GWR 4-6-0s employed on West of England workings during the 1940s and early 1950s included 'Granges', 'Halls' and Hawksworth 'Counties'. The latter engines were introduced in 1947 and were in many ways an austerity version of the 'Castles', although these two-cylinder 4-6-0s can also be seen as a final development of the versatile 'Halls'.

Freight services were worked by a number of Great Western locomotive classes, including Churchward's '4300' Moguls. Introduced in 1911, they were true mixed traffic locomotives and, as such, worked both passenger and freight services. Another class of tender engine used in the area was the Collett '2251' 0-6-0 introduced in 1930 to replace the earlier 'Dean Goods' and Armstrong 0-6-0s. These new engines were intended for light mixed traffic duties on main lines and branch lines and as 'Yellow' engines they had wide route availability. For the heaviest work, the impressive '2800' class 2-8-0s could often be seen on long-distance freight trains. In complete contrast, 0-6-0 saddle tanks or pannier tanks performed shunting duties in Bridgwater carriage works and on the dock lines.

Diesel locomotives took over from the late 1950s, early appearances being the two types of 'Warship', A1A-A1A and B-B type '4s', while the NBL B-B type '2s' were followed by 'Western' C-Cs and 'Hymek' B-Bs, all with hydraulic transmission. In the event, the original Western Region diesels had comparatively short lives, their hydraulic transmission being condemned as non-standard. It was diesel-electric locomotives such as the class '50s' drafted in from the London Midland Region to replace the 'Westerns' that were to find longer term favour, alongside HST sets on the best work from the later 1970s. The last of the old order were perhaps the class '47' Co-Cos, which were extensively used on Virgin cross-country services through to the summer of 2002, while First Great Western used examples, and re-engined class '57' variants in the longer term, on its limited number of locomotive-hauled duties, including the overnight Penzance-Paddington 'Night Riviera' sleeper services that passed through Bridgwater in the

Allocated to Bristol's St Phillips Marsh shed, GWR 'Grange' class 4-6-0 No 6836 *Estevarney Grange* leads an empty cattle train down through Bridgwater station on Sunday, June 17, 1951. The GWR 4-4-0 types that had once been commonplace here were largely usurped by 4-6-0s by this time. The Railway Hotel on the left was an early addition when the line opened, as was the B&ER carriage works to the south of the town. The bay platform line in view leads to an extended loop that served the Wilmott Breedon engine piston factory (Wellworthy's after 1963) in Colley Lane, and ran onwards to the carriage works. P Short/Kidderminster Railway Museum





Sharing duties with Johnson 0-4-4Ts, Midland '3F' 0-6-0s were a familiar sight on the Bridgwater branch, and No 3248 has arrived at Bridgwater in the 1940s with a train from Edington Junction. World War Two may have come to a close but the station staff are still 'digging for victory' by the looks it with a well attended vegetable patch occupying the land adjacent to the arrival road.
W A Camwell/SLS Collection

small hours. The railway through Bridgwater is now almost exclusively a multiple-unit operation, be it FGW class '158' 'Sprinter', class '166' 'Networker Turbo Express', class '800' Hitachi 'AT300' and short-formations 'Castle' HSTs, or seven-coach HSTs and 'Voyagers' on cross-country work.

In contrast to the B&ER main line, a fairly limited range of locomotives worked the Edington Junction to Bridgwater branch. Midland-style engines of Samuel Johnson's design were sent to the Somerset & Dorset system after 1877, the first examples being typical Johnson 0-4-4Ts. The first two batches were numbered in sequence from 10 to 14 and from 29 to 32, and they were initially employed on the main line between Bath and Bournemouth. Later, following the introduction of 4-4-0s on the S&DJR main line, the 0-4-4Ts were relegated to local branch services, and in this capacity they became familiar sights on the Bridgwater branch. Subsequent batches included Nos 52 and 53, both of which were allocated to Bridgwater. The Midland 0-4-4Ts worked on the Bridgwater line until the British Railways period. On August 4, 1952, for example, '1F' 0-4-4T No 58072 was recorded at work on the line, while sister engines Nos 58046, 58047, 58073, 58086 and 58088 were stationed locally during the early 1950s.

Former Midland Railway six-coupled tender engines were in use on the Bridgwater S&D route in the later LMS period and into the BR era, an example being '3F' 0-6-0 No 43216, which was recorded at the head of a single-coach passenger train on March 1, 1952. This veteran locomotive had been built by Neilson & Co Ltd in 1902 for service on the Somerset & Dorset Joint system, its original number having been S&DJR No 72.

Edington Junction to Bridgwater (North)

Having examined the history of the railways around Bridgwater from their inception until the British Railways era, it is appropriate to now look at the stations and other infrastructure in greater detail, starting at Edington Junction, where the Bridgwater branch diverged southwestwards from the S&DJR line from Evercreech Junction to Highbridge and Burnham-on-Sea.

It appears that Edington was not one of the original stations, the Somerset Central line having been brought into use on August 28, 1854, whereas Edington did not appear in timetables until 1856. The station was situated in an expanse of dead-flat countryside with an average elevation of around 16ft above mean sea level. In wintertime these former marshlands were susceptible to flooding, and to help alleviate this problem the area was covered by a network of drainage dykes or drains. Edington was, at first, a single platform station known as Edington Road, but the opening of the nominally independent Bridgwater Railway in July 1890 transformed this Somerset station into a junction, with additional facilities for terminating branch trains. In its new guise, the station boasted up and down platforms on each side of a crossing loop, the up (westbound) platform having a platform face on its south side to accommodate Bridgwater trains. There was a gated level crossing to the east of the platforms, and a small goods yard was available on the up side.

Edington station building was a timber-framed structure with a low-pitched gable roof that was extended forward for a short

distance to form a projecting platform canopy. The timber walls were clad in horizontal weather-boarding and this otherwise undistinguished building was adorned with typical 'V-and-hole' fretwork valancing. The goods yard contained one dead-end siding, and two further sidings extended westwards from the crossing loop and the branch run-round loop; these were known as the down siding and the branch siding respectively. The 1938 Railway Clearing House *Handbook of Stations* reveals that Edington was able to handle coal, livestock, horse boxes and general merchandise traffic.

The station was signalled from a gable-roofed signal cabin sited west of the platforms on the up side. Typical of Dutton design, the box was of all-timber construction with a slated roof. When inspected by the Board of Trade on July 6, 1890 it was equipped with a 35-lever Dutton frame (including three spare levers). The branch was controlled by Tyer's No 3 tablet instruments, whereas the main line was at that time worked by Train Staff & Ticket in conjunction with block instruments. The original lever frame was an unusual type known as the Dutton-Buck catch-handleless frame, but in 1915 this comparatively rare piece of equipment was replaced by a standard L&SWR-type 39-lever Stevens frame; the level crossing gates were manually worked.

As we have seen, the Bridgwater branch was closed to passenger traffic in 1952, and to freight traffic just two years later. Thereafter, the facilities at Edington were progressively reduced, much of the trackwork being taken out of use in February 1956. At the same time the signal box was closed and the block section extended from Shapwick to Highbridge East C signal box. The station had, in the meantime, been renamed Edington Burtle, this alteration having been implemented with effect from June 9, 1953. In its final years Edington Burtle had one platform and just one siding, which was released by a groundframe.

While many branch services were a single coach in the later years there were exceptions and on Friday, September 5, 1952 the 1.40pm from Bridgwater, which was a mixed train, arrives at Edington Junction hauled by Midland 0-4-4T No 58072. The usual brake third is strengthened with an additional passenger coach, and a nice string of wagons bring up the rear as the train comes off the branch and crosses over to the down platform. R M Casserley





In the station, Midland '3F' 0-6-0 No 43194 waits for the road to clear with the 1.15pm service from Evercreech Junction to Highbridge. The crew of Midland 0-4-4T No 58072 will presumably pass the single line token to the crew of No 43194, who will then pass it to the Edington Junction signalman. In the distance, another Midland '3F' 0-6-0, No 43204, waits outside on the single-track with the 11.25am Evercreech North yard to Highbridge Wharf goods. H C Casserley

Cossington

On leaving Edington Junction, branch trains crossed the South Drain and the remains of the Glastonbury Canal, and then ran south-westwards across level terrain. After about two miles, up workings reached Board's siding (2 miles 18 chains), on the up side of the line. The siding, serving a quarry on the south side of the railway, was controlled from a 3-lever groundframe that was released by a key on the single line tablet. The siding connection was facing to the direction of up trains, and the siding itself was protected by a gate. Its traffic was normally worked by trips from Edington Junction, propelling movements being necessary on the outwards journey.

Cossington station (3 miles 3 chains) was almost a mile further on. The facilities here consisted of a single platform on the up side, together with a small goods yard and a stone-

built station building that incorporated domestic accommodation for the stationmaster and his family, the house portion being a substantial two-storey structure, while the booking office wing was of just one storey. Both portions featured gable roofs, while the booking office wing was equipped with a lean-to platform canopy.

The goods yard, on the up side, contained a single siding that was linked to the running line by facing and trailing connections. The yard was able to deal with a full range of facilities, including coal, livestock, furniture, horse boxes, vehicles and general merchandise, while the points and signals were controlled from a single-storey groundframe hut sited on the platform; this was originally equipped with an 8-lever Dutton frame, although a 10-lever frame was later provided. The track layout was simplified

during the 1930s and the semaphore signals removed.

Bawdrip Halt

From Cossington, the railway continued southwestwards towards its modest summit on a rising gradient of 1 in 108, the summit being marked by a deep cutting which was spanned by an over-bridge that carried the A39 trunk road across the line. Beyond, the line descended towards Bawdrip on a falling gradient of 1 in 72. Bawdrip Halt (4 miles 14 chains) opened on July 7, 1923 in response to requests from local residents, and its facilities consisted a single concrete platform, 140ft in length and on the up side of the running line. An open-fronted waiting shelter provided minimal facilities for local travellers, while at night the halt was lit by simple oil lamps.



After waiting for the up passenger train to depart from Edington Junction at 2pm, Midland '3F' 0-6-0 No 43204 enters the station with the 11.25am goods from Evercreech North yard to Highbridge Wharf as the fireman of Midland 0-4-4T No 58072 descends from the cab to begin the shunt and run-round. Although unrecorded by the photographer, the wagons from Bridgwater were presumably transferred to the up goods before No 58072 shunted the passenger coaches over to the bay ready to depart for Bridgwater again at 2.35pm. The branch passenger service was unbalanced, with four down trains and five up services – an evening goods, departing from Bridgwater at 8.15pm, evened up the numbers. The level crossing gates at this end of Edington Junction station were worked by the porter.

H C Casserley



Cossington was the only intermediate station on the Bridgwater Railway when the line opened in 1890. This 1946 view, facing west, was captured shortly before the platform canopy was removed. The small goods yard was beyond the station building on the same side. The surrounding earthworks give some idea of the construction work required here as the line found its way over the Polden Hills after the easy going Somerset levels at either end of the line. R S Carpenter



The Bridgwater Railway was absorbed into the L&SWR in 1921, and two years later another intermediate station was provided on the branch after local petitioning. Constructed in pre-cast concrete, typical of the recently-created Southern Railway, Bawdrip Halt opened on July 7, 1923. After the halt turned in good patronage, a shelter was provided the following year. Passengers have just left a down train in this view from 1932.

Bridgwater North (S&DJR)

Continuing their journey, trains crossed over the King's Sedgemoor Drain and, still heading southwest, the line passed beneath the A39 road for a second time. Nearing their destination, westbound workings were faced with a further stretch of 1 in 72 as the line climbed over the Bristol & Exeter main line and the A38 road. Turning on to a southerly heading, the route then passed a private siding giving access to Board's brick & tile works, on the down side at 6 miles 61 chains. This gated siding was facing to the direction of down trains, and it was worked from a 3-lever groundframe on the up side of the running line. Beyond, trains crossed a minor road on the level before entering their terminus, some 7 miles 15 chains from the start of the journey at Edington Junction.

When opened in 1890 the station was known simply as Bridgwater but the name was changed to Bridgwater (North) in 1949 to prevent confusion with the nearby ex-Great Western station, which became known, albeit briefly, as Bridgwater (General). The S&DJR station was a typical branch line terminus with a simple track layout that had changed little since the 1890s. It incorporated a double-sided platform for passenger traffic, together with a run-round loop, an engine shed, and an array of goods sidings. The run-round loop was sited to the north of the platforms, while the goods yard sidings fanned-out on the west side of the station. The platform was covered, for much of its length, by an arc-roofed canopy.

The station building, which was sited at right-angles to the terminal buffer stops, was of red brick construction with a low-pitched

hipped-roof and round-arched windows, its general appearance being vaguely Italianate. The station master's house was sited immediately east of the main station building, this detached brick-built structure being of 1½ storeys with prominent gables. In its opening report, published on July 18, 1890, the *Bristol Mercury* opined that the Bridgwater Railway terminus was "a very neat and compact station." The goods yard contained a full range of facilities for dealing with coal, livestock, furniture, horse boxes, road vehicles, and general merchandise traffic.

The yard crane was of 7-ton capacity, while the goods shed was an impressive red brick building with round-topped windows and prominent buttresses. The cattle pens were served by a siding on the west side of the yard that curved southwestwards and thence

The view north from the island platform at Bridgwater, towards the station run-round loop and single-storey signal box at the crossing in the distance. From September 26, 1949 the station was re-named Bridgwater (North) and the rather underwhelming new signage is visible on the left. Behind that are the engine shed sidings and coal stage. John Board & Co Ltd were pioneers in the development of reinforced concrete and had numerous rail-served facilities in and around the area, one of which is on the horizon behind the lamp; Board's siding between Cossington and Edington Junction was another. The line had dodged closure proposals in 1933 and again in 1940, due to increased wartime traffic, but the balance sheet could no longer hide behind company loyalty in the British Railways era when many duplicate facilities on the network were culled. Joseph H Moss/R S Carpenter Collection





The safety valves have lifted on Midland 0-4-4T No 58072 at Bridgwater (North) as the crew wait time on September 5, 1952 at the head of the 1.40pm mixed train to Edington Junction. The full brake at the rear is not attached and will be left behind when the train departs, but goods wagons marshalled in the arrival platform on the left will be picked up – the passenger train ‘depart’ and then shunt back to add them on the rear before continuing on its way. Most of the goods sidings here had been taken out of use on January 23, 1952 and removed, but freight would outlive the passenger service. After this was withdrawn in December 1952, the summer 1953 freight service operated as a single trip, leaving Edington Junction at 3.30pm and departing from Bridgwater with the return working at 6pm; it ran engine and brake van only to and from Highbridge. R M Casserley

Johnson ‘Scottie Goods’ 0-6-0 No 51 straddles the 50ft turntable as the crew take water on shed at Bridgwater. The station is behind the photographer and the engine shed is out of view to the left. The covered coaling stage on the right seems to have fallen out of favour and was later removed, replaced by the open air arrangement apparent bottom right. Built by the Vulcan Foundry in October 1884, this view was taken after this 0-6-0 was re-boilered in January 1903; its withdrawal came in November 1925. Lens of Sutton Collection



northwards through 180° in order to reach Bridgwater docks and the S&DJR wharf. The latter facility saw little traffic after World War One but the little-used line remained in situ until 1942, when it was finally lifted in connection with the wartime salvage drive. In its last years the siding had been used for wagon storage.

The engine shed, which was clearly in the same architectural family as the station building and goods shed, was a single-road structure with a gable roof; the building had been extended in 1898 to accommodate two locomotives. The usual coaling and watering facilities were available, and there was also a 49ft 8in diameter engine turntable.

The signal box, which was originally sited to the north of the platform on the up side, was equipped with a 13-lever Dutton frame (including two white-painted spares), but this was replaced around 1910 when the signalling

arrangements were modified, the signal box being moved to a new position on the down side beside the level crossing at the north end of the station. The new frame incorporated 14-levers (with one spare), and the station was signalled with down starting and down advanced starting signals, together with an up home signal and an up distant, the latter being permanently fixed at caution. The station was signalled in such a way that the up (eastern) platform was used for arrivals, while the down (western) platform face was for departing trains.

Bridgwater (North) remained in use for freight traffic following the cessation of

passenger services on December 1, 1952, and on June 27, 1954 a new connection was made between the former Somerset & Dorset Joint station and the nearby GWR docks branch in order that goods traffic could reach the S&DJR goods yard following the closure of the line from Edington. The closure was put into effect in October 1954 and the S&DJR branch was subsequently lifted between 6 miles 51 chains and Edington Junction. A further retraction occurred in 1964 when the line was cut-back to 6 miles 71 chains following the closure of Boar’s siding, while final closure of the S&DJR station and goods yard took place in April 1967.

The last goods train left Bridgwater (North) for Edington Junction on October 1, 1954. After that date the British Road Services depot established at the station and John Board’s brick and tile works further up the line were served via a new spur to the former GWR docks branch. In this view, taken on September 24, 1961, the rails on the left disappear away, across the road to join up with the docks branch. The vacant turntable pit is visible in front of the former engine shed. Although the single-road building was extended in 1898 to accommodate two engines, it was not being used to stable engines overnight so was eventually leased to the Co-operative Society from 1928 as a store. R S Carpenter Collection





The platforms at Dunball were staggered some distance from each other, either side of the King's Sedgemoor drain. The arrangement is apparent in this view facing south towards Bridgwater. The short branch serving Dunball Wharf curves sharply away on the right. Trackwork here was simplified from November 16, 1958 with the elimination of the second track on the branch, which linked to a flat crossing across the main line. This view is after that date and before closure of the signal box, which occurred on July 11, 1965. A groundframe then gave access to the branch until its complete closure from April 22, 1967. It was something of a milestone day as the Bridgwater docks lines closed at the same time after BR failed to find a buyer for the operation. Michael Hale/Great Western Trust

The GWR main line Dunball

The Bristol & Exeter main line runs more or less due south across level terrain between Worle Junction, Highbridge, Bridgwater and Durston. Dunball, some 2 miles 42 chains to the north of Bridgwater, was the site of a small station that opened in June 1873 and closed with effect from October 5, 1964. The platforms here were widely staggered, the up platform being somewhat further south than its counterpart on the down side. The 1938 Railway Clearing House *Handbook of Stations* classifies Dunball as a passenger-only station, although there was a goods-only branch to Dunball Wharf, together with private sidings serving local industrial concerns such as Dunball Pottery, the Downend Cement Works and the Salt Union Company. In addition, another short branch line, some way to the north of the station, served the Puriton Royal Ordnance Factory.

BR 12-ton box vans line the quayside at Dunball as Dutch-owned 328 ton gross general cargo vessel *Raket*, built in 1953, is loaded alongside in October 1964. The passenger station closed at Dunball in the same month and although the rail connection to the wharf didn't last much longer, the quayside is still active and is used for the landing of stone products, mainly marine sand and gravels dredged in the Bristol Channel.

P Strong/Kidderminster Railway Museum

Drewry 204hp 0-6-0DM shunter No D2142 has run up the main line from Bridgwater and now shunts the J Bibby & Sons sidings at Dunball Wharf in October 1964. 'Bibbys' were animal feed producers and had developed the site in the 1950s after taking over the rail-served redundant premises of a plasterboard factory. That enterprise had imported gypsum from Rouen in France and despatched products by rail. Three of these Drewry engines had taken over trip working and shunting duties from steam at Bridgwater in 1960, with the allocation on Sunday, July 17, 1960 being Nos D2140, D2141 and D2142. The class was to have a long association with the area as even after BR finished with them locally, the British Cellophane Ltd factory between here and Bridgwater employed the services of No D2133 from 1969 until the factory ceased rail traffic in the 1990s. P Strong/Kidderminster Railway Museum





An Austin 12 graces the forecourt on the upside of the stylish station at Bridgwater in August 1951. The forecourt was shared with the adjacent Railway Hotel and although the station has recently benefited from a major restoration, the hotel was demolished some time ago, to be replaced by a garage. R E G Read/Kidderminster Railway Museum

Dunball booked around 6,000 tickets each year during the early years of the 20th century, falling to no more than about 2,000 ordinary bookings per annum during the early to mid-1930s. In 1913, for example, the station issued 6,155 tickets, rising to 6,417 ordinary tickets and 12 season tickets by 1923, although in 1937 the ticket sales amounted to only 2,031 ordinary tickets and ten season tickets. With several private sidings in the immediate vicinity, goods traffic would have been fairly buoyant, but it is not possible to provide any traffic statistics because, for operational purposes, Dunball was under the control of Bridgwater, and its freight traffic was included with that from the latter station. In 1903, Dunball had a staff of six, although the number of employees was reduced to four by 1919, and the station became an unstaffed halt in November 1961.

Bridgwater (GWR)

Opened on June 14, 1841, Bridgwater has an impressive range of station buildings, the main building being on the up side, while a subsidiary building is available on the opposite platform. Although these buildings have often been attributed to Brunel, the station has been rebuilt and modified at various times. In May 1881, for example, the *Bristol Mercury* reported that the GWR was going to build a new station at Bridgwater because the appearance of the original structure had, "for a long time, been simply a disgrace."

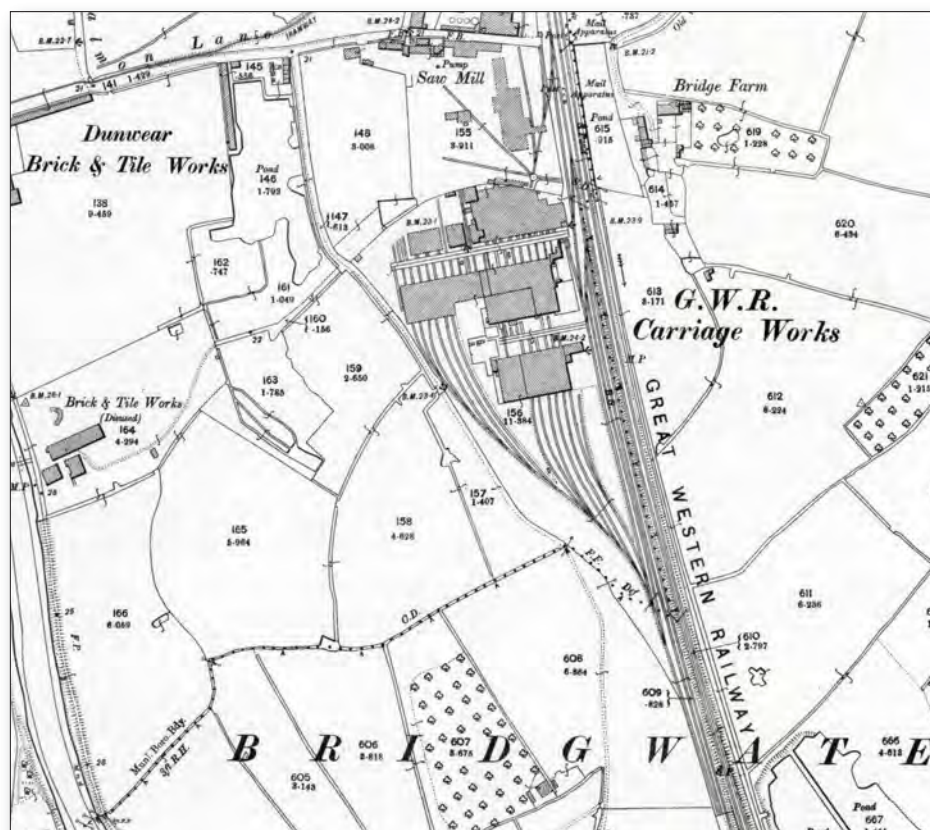
The Bristol & Exeter Railway carriage works at Bridgwater is something of an enigma, as it appears to have escaped the attention of photographers. By the time this map was produced in 1905, a fan of lines provided a connection to the works buildings at the south end, but the original broad gauge connection was a single link to the traverser that ran the full length of the sheds. Carriage repairs ceased in 1934 when the works was turned over to the inspection of wagon tarpaulins. Most of the buildings were lost to a fire in 1947 but locomotives outstationed from Taunton and used on docks and local trip workings continued to use the engine shed, which was at the southeast corner of the southernmost building and closed in 1960. Crown Copyright

The main station building is a single-storey structure with a raised parapet, the main façade having a projecting centre portion and two recessed flanking wings, while the platform frontage has a full-length canopy with draft screens. The window apertures are square-headed with bracketed cills, while the booking hall boasts a rectangular lantern with a planked hipped roof over a row of square panes. The up and down buildings are linked by an impressive covered footbridge with wide staircases, cast-iron balusters, and swept oak handrails, while the deck of the bridge is slightly arched; tongue & groove panelling is below the four-pane windows. There are now just two platforms, although short bays were formerly provided on both sides.

The goods yard, which was closed in November 1965, was sited to the north of the

passenger station on the up side. It contained the usual accommodation for coal, livestock, and vehicle traffic, while the yard crane was of 8-ton capacity. The goods shed was a large red brick structure with a gable roof and boldly-arched windows, the window apertures being arranged in the form of a continuous arcade.

The former Bristol & Exeter carriage & wagon works was situated to the south of the station, again on the up side of the running lines. Bridgwater was chosen as the site of the B&ER wagon works as it was approximately half-way between Bristol and Exeter, and by 1851 it employed over 100 people. The works remained in operation during the Great Western period, although in its final years it was used mainly for the repair of wagon sheets. Sadly the works was closed following a fire on August 25, 1947.



The facilities provided at the carriage works included a single-road engine shed (sub to Taunton) that opened in 1893 to house shunting locomotives. The allocation in 1921 comprised '1076' class 0-6-0PT No 1256 and '1854' class 0-6-0PT No 1795, while in December 1947 the resident locomotives were 0-6-0PT No 2038 and 0-4-0ST No 1338, the saddle tank being an ex-Cardiff Railway engine dating from 1898 that was used for local shunting work on the Bridgwater dock lines. The shed was closed in 1960 but 0-4-0ST No 1338 remained in service until 1963, after which it was placed on permanent display at the Yieldingtree Railway Museum at Bleadon & Uphill station; the locomotive is now at Didcot Railway Centre.

Prior to rationalization, Bridgwater boasted a docks branch, which ran westwards from a junction near the north end of the passenger station and crossed several public roads on the level before terminating on the east side of the river Parrett at what became known as Clink yard. When opened in 1845 the docks branch had been a standard gauge horse-worked tramway, but it was later converted to broad gauge, and in 1871 it was

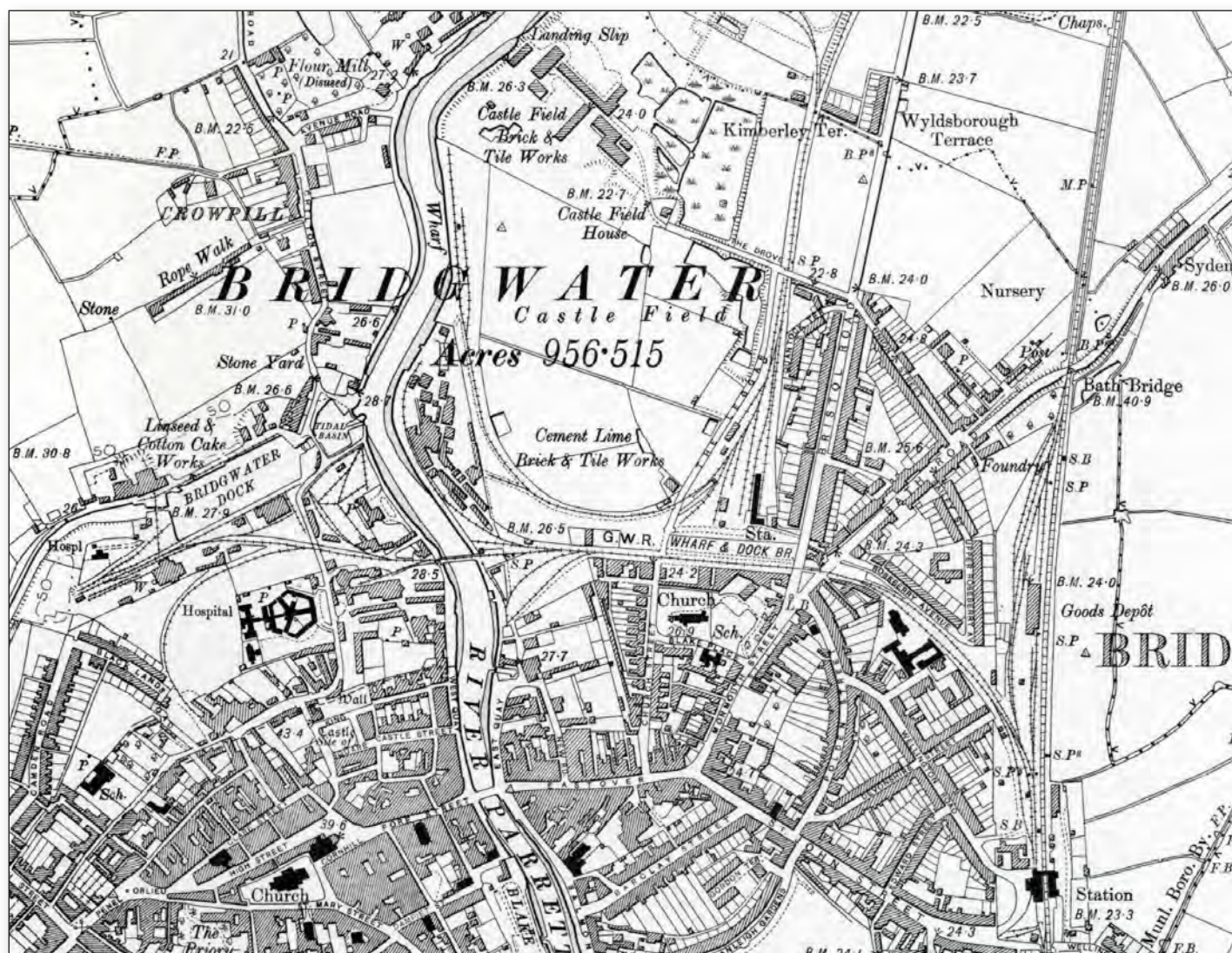
extended westwards across the river Parrett, the river being crossed by the so-called 'Telescopic Bridge' – it had one fixed girder span and two moving spans, one of which could be moved sideways, while the other could be rolled eastwards on large wheels to fill the space that had been vacated by the traversing span. The bridge was initially worked manually by winches at each end, but these were soon replaced by a steam engine housed in a brick engine house on the east bank of the river. The new connection established in 1954 between the GWR dock lines and the former S&DJR goods yard was situated to the east of the Telescopic Bridge.

The GWR docks branch gave access to a number of private sidings that served local industries, such as Messrs Starkey, Knight & Ford, Sully & Co, the Somerset Trading Company, Barham Bros Ltd, and Messrs Croad & Brown. Further industrial sidings served Messrs H & J C Morgan and the British Portland Cement Manufacturers, while in 1935 a new siding was opened for the benefit of the British Cellophane Company, the latter facility being sited to the north of the station on the

down side. The Cellophane company's siding was for many years worked by diminutive 0-4-0STs, but in 1969 these were replaced by a former BR 204hp 0-6-0DM diesel shunter, No D2133. The dockside lines and industrial sidings have been closed for many years, although some of the yard sidings and a truncated section of the docks branch have remained in situ as a loading point for nuclear flask traffic from Hinkley Point power station.

In the days of steam the station was controlled from two signal boxes known as Bridgwater East and Bridgwater West, the East box being sited on the down side at 151 miles 17 chains, while West box was on the up side at 151 miles 43 chains. The signalling arrangements were modified in June 1932 when the East and West boxes were replaced by a new cabin sited opposite the goods yard on the up side at 151 miles 29 chains. The new box was a hipped-roof structure with distinctive five pane windows and, like several other GWR signal boxes erected during the 1930s, it was of steel-framed construction with concrete block infilling; the box closed in March 1972.

The isolated GWR and S&DJR railway systems are illustrated in this 1905 map of Bridgwater docks. The original B&ER riverside wharf, latterly known as Clink yard, is on the east side of the river Parrett, adjacent to the telescopic bridge installed in 1871 to provide rail access to the former canal dock at the far western end. Between the canal and tidal basin is the floating harbour, with the line curving south around the hospital grounds leading to a brewery. A timber yard was later established either side of the branch, immediately south of the S&DJR terminus. The S&DJR is linked to a riverside wharf downstream of the GWR facilities. A linseed and cotton cake works (animal feed), brick and tile works and a stone yard are all marked on the map, but general merchandise, aggregate, timber, coal, cement and livestock were typical commodities also going through the port. Crown Copyright





A pair of locomotives to work the yards and dock lines was usually outstationed from Taunton at the sub-shed in Bridgwater. On September 5, 1952 one of these engines was former Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley Railway 0-6-0ST No 2194 which is seen busily shunting the goods yard at the north end of Bridgwater (General) station. Built by the Avonside Engine Co Ltd in May 1903, it passed to the GWR on July 1, 1922 and has been suitably 'Swindonized' with a copper cap chimney and safety valve cover; its withdrawal came just five months later. R M Casserley/R N Smith Collection



Railway staff ride the shunters truck as GWR '2021' class 0-6-0PT No 2127 returns from the docks and enters the sidings adjacent to Roseberry Avenue on June 22, 1950. Engines outstationed at Bridgwater had to be capable of negotiating some weight-restricted areas and tricky curves, both in the docks and at the nearby Dunball Wharf. Dean's '2021' class panniers were subject to some restrictions beyond the telescopic bridge over the river Parrett so this working has probably come from Clink yard, which was the original B&ER riverside wharf prior to the construction of the link to the floating harbour. P J Lynch/Kidderminster Railway Museum



The Bridgwater Docks branch left the station goods yard and in quick succession then crossed Bath Road and Bristol Road over level crossings before arriving here, where two loops served a timber yard and its storage sheds on both sides of the line. Colour-Rail.com/20802

Former Cardiff Railway 0-4-0ST No 1338 is shunting wagons at the west end of the timber shed sidings in about 1957. This engine was allocated to Taunton shed in 1943 and outstationed here as it was found to be ideally suited to the tight, twisting lines around the docks. Dieselization at Bridgwater saw it move to Swansea East Dock shed in June 1960. A Linakar/Kidderminster Railway Museum



In traffic terms, Bridgwater was always an important station, 114,865 tickets being sold in 1903, while in 1923 the station issued 112,499 ordinary tickets and 727 season tickets. In 1903 Bridgwater handled 217,827 tons of goods, but there was, thereafter, a slight decline, and by the 1930s the station was dealing with an average of about 170,000 tons per annum. In 1938 the local staff establishment comprised 33 at the passenger station and a further 48 in the goods department.

Following privatization, passenger services through Bridgwater were initially worked by three train operating companies:

main line services between London, Bristol and Penzance were operated by Great Western Trains; a number of useful local and semi-fast passenger services were run by Wales & West Trains between Penzance, Bath and South Wales; Virgin CrossCountry worked a core route between Penzance, Bristol, Birmingham and Scotland. Subsequently, the GWR main line operation was wholly FirstGroup-owned

from December 1998, thereafter operating as First Great Western, while 2002 saw the Wales & West franchise split into two, with most of the West Country services then worked by Wessex Trains, which in turn was merged with the main line operation as the 'Greater Western' franchise. With this in mind, since April 2006 the TOC operating Bridgwater station is Great Western Railway, with most trains running between Cardiff and Taunton, although a limited number of services to and from Paddington continue to call, while since November 2007 the passing cross-country trains are operated by Arriva.



The water level in the floating harbour at Bridgwater was maintained by locks with the canal and tidal basin giving access to the river Parrett. These were constructed in the era of sail and restricted the size of vessels that could use the docks. On December 18, 1959, on the south side of the dock we find ex-Cardiff Railway 0-4-0ST No 1338 alongside the 384 ton gross Dutch-owned general cargo vessel Alderd L, which was built in 1955. The railway terminated in a shallow cutting out of view to the west, where a small wooden shed once housed petrol Simplex engine No 15. Weighing just 8 tons and developing 40hp, this was ideally suited to shunting the lines that ran over the canal to the far reaches of the harbour. Colour-Rail.com/321639

GWR 'Castle' class 4-6-0 No 5075 Wellington enters Bridgwater station with a down empty stock working in August 1962. In 1932 a new signal box opposite the goods shed eliminated two previous cabins and it is just in view on the right, adjacent to the down loop. On the left, the rails that link to the docks and goods yard are apparent. A number of these are still in use today, in connection with the transfer of materials to and from Hinkley Point nuclear power station, which opened in 1965. One thing that cannot be conveyed in a photograph is of course smell, and it is perhaps worth adding that the rail-served British Cellophane Ltd factory, opened just north of here in 1936 on the down side, certainly added to the ambience of the town, with a odour often enveloping the air! B Harding/Colour-Rail.com/BRW877



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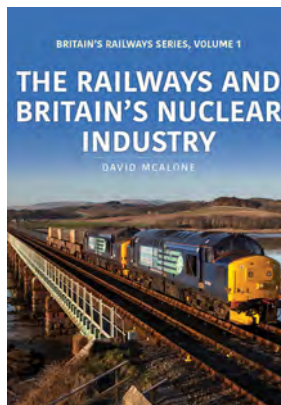
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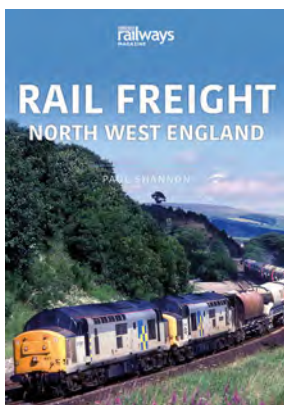
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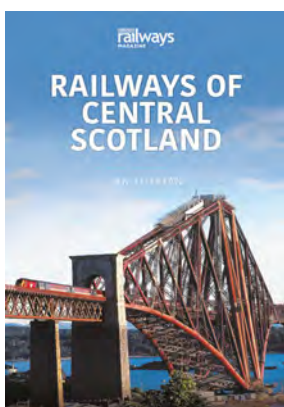
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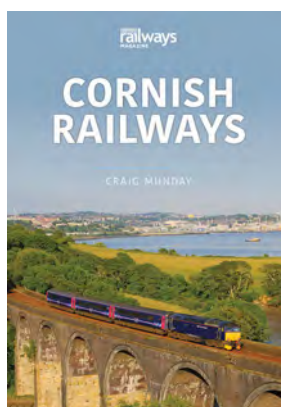
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STEAM DAYS

In Colour

I 88: GER lines in London

Contrasting express and suburban steam-hauled operations under the wires from Liverpool Street, through Bethnal Green to Stratford in the late 1950s are recalled through the photographs of Dick Riley and Ken Wightman. Early dieselization of the Norwich main line was already in hand by this time, with a quickly evaporating steam scene, East Anglia gaining widespread modernisation long before much of the country, but a glimpse of the North Woolwich branch proves that even in March 1962 there were pockets of steam-hauled passenger work.

Although a veteran Great Eastern Railway 'S56' of May 1904, originally No 53, after 55 years of service we find Holden 'J69/1' class 0-6-0T No 68619 in exemplary condition at Liverpool Street station on October 2, 1959. It was one of the station pilots at this former Great Eastern terminus, the long-standing pride and care for this engine by the men of Stratford extending to a repaint into fully lined out GER blue in September 1959, along with the pre-grouping company's coat of arms below the running number, while the British Railways heraldic crest adorns the side tanks. In the background, and in stark contrast, we find grubby English Electric 500hp experimental 0-6-0DE shunter No D0226, which was new to Stratford shed in July 1957 as No D226. Painted black but with a broad orange stripe mid-way up the body-side, this was carried at a lower level on the rear, and as a 'V' on the front. August 1959 saw it renumbered so as not to clash with a new type '4', but it would only serve until October 1960; sister engine No D0227 had hydraulic transmission and survives in preservation. R C Riley



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An impressive line up graces Liverpool Street station on May 11, 1957, from left to right: Gresley 'B17/6' or 'Sandringham' class 4-6-0 No 61622 Alnwick Castle is at the head of an express, while the two resplendent station pilots – Hill/Gresley 'N7/4' class 0-6-2T No 69614 and Holden 'J69/1' No 68619 – await their next call from the middle roads, while the stock on the right is adorned with 'The Broadman' carriage boards. The up 'Broadman' was the 3.30pm to Cromer and Sheringham, the inaugural service being run on June 5, 1950. The pilots are both in lined out British Railways mixed traffic black livery, this view predating the 0-6-0T's first receipt of the heraldic crest and then its full repaint into blue. Although kept in equally spotless condition, No 69614 remained in black. The 'B17' is a Yarmouth South Town engine at this time, and it would be withdrawn in September 1958. R C Riley

Within the fleet of 73 Gresley 'B17s' there were originally two distinct naming themes, stately homes and football clubs. The 48 locomotives dating from October 1930 through to September 1935 followed the theme established by the first of the class, Sandringham, with the exception of LNER No 2845 The Suffolk Regiment. Subsequently, 25 'Footballers' emerged between March 3, 1936 and July 19, 1937, while Nos 2830 Thoresby Park and 2839 Rendlesham Hall respectively became Tottenham Hotspur and Norwich City in January 1938. Six other name changes carried out between 1937 and 1958 could not blur the perception that engines were either a 'Sandringham' or a 'Footballer'. This April 9, 1957 view records Colchester-allocated 'B17/6' No 61662 Manchester United at the Liverpool Street locomotive servicing point prior to its use on a down express. Withdrawn from service in December 1959, in 2020 a new build project is ongoing to recreate this very locomotive, whilst another 'B17' project is working on the creation of Spirit of Sandringham. R C Riley





The access road above the stabling point at Liverpool Street was a popular spot for trainspotters, as is evident in this May 11, 1957 view of the terminus's 'N7/4' 0-6-2T west side station pilot, No 69614, the Part 4 sub-class denoting a round-top firebox. The descending roadway effectively created an east and west side of the terminus, and at this time the east side was already electrified but the west side retained a fair amount of steam-hauled duties. Although first appearing as an A J Hill design, the GER 'L77' class of 1915, the pictured locomotive is of post-grouping build under Gresley, being the third of ten built at Stratford (as were the 12 GER engines). It appeared as No 992E in December 1923 but was soon LNER No 7992; it would be withdrawn from service at the end of 1960. R C Riley

Heading away from the west side platforms at Liverpool Street with a train of Gresley 'Quad-Art' compartment stock is 'N7/5' class 0-6-2T No 69663 on October 4, 1958. This particular engine was built by Robert Stephenson & Co Ltd in 1925, with the 112 LNER Group Standard examples built at five premises in all – Stratford (10), Gorton (40), Robert Stephenson (20), William Beardmore & Co Ltd (20) and Doncaster (32). Completed as an 'N7/1', the evolved GER design under Gresley, Part 5 was a wartime classification that denoted an 'N7/1' modified with a round-top firebox. The signal box on the much higher level to the left is controlling movements at the neighbouring ex-North London Railway terminus, Broad Street. That station closed in 1986 and subsequent development has seen the pictured cutting completely covered over with new 'land'. R C Riley





Only 1 mile 10 chains out from Liverpool Street, by the time departing trains reached Bethnal Green station their engines had encountered a short and sharp 1 in 70 gradient of about $\frac{1}{3}$ mile and then reached level ground. Summiting the climb on February 28, 1959 is Gresley 'B17/6' No 61656 Leeds United, a Yarmouth South Town allocated 4-6-0, although at the end of the coming summer it would be on the books of Norwich shed. The 'B17s' were designed for the Great Eastern Section to supersede the Holden 'B12s' of Great Eastern heritage, which by 1928 were struggling to cope with the growing weight of the best trains. Leeds United was rebuilt as Part 6 in November 1953, which involved the use of a 100A boiler as employed on the Thompson 'B1s'. R C Riley

Rather less common on the Great Eastern Section were Peppercorn 'K1' 2-6-0s, but on the same day we find Stratford shed's No 62070 passing tender-first behind the platforms of Bethnal Green station with a down empty stock duty from Liverpool Street; it is heading towards Stratford. Completed by the North British Locomotive Co Ltd in March 1950, this Mogul was new to March shed and spent the next 12 years gracing the allocation of either March or Stratford, until transferred away to the former Great Central shed of Retford Thrumpton in June 1962; it was withdrawn from there in January 1965. R C Riley





Calling at Bethnal Green with an Enfield Town suburban service is spruced up Hill/Gresley 'N7/5' 0-6-2T No 69665 on October 7, 1958. It is refreshing to see such pride taken on the London railways at a time when cleaners were often hard to find and many steam locomotives were looking down at heel, but the Stratford-based engine looks resplendent, and the station flowerbeds are a joy to behold too. This station dates back to 1872 when the GER was forging into the outer suburbs with extension to Hackney Downs, Stoke Newington, Seven Sisters and Lower Edmonton. Enfield (later Enfield Town) had joined the railway network on March 1, 1849 – via a branch from Angel Road and through Lower Edmonton – but the new route of 1872 brought it to within 11 miles of Liverpool Street. K W Wightman

Another view from the same day records sister engine No 69658, which is likewise treated to some non-standard embellishments, a red-backed smokebox numberplate and a white rim to the smokebox door – such practices were encouraged at Stratford at this time as they engendered pride in the job. The disc code perpetuates Great Eastern practice, a complicated system that once boasted 200 variations but was down to about 125 by 1942 – displaying these codes continued through to the end of steam operation on the northeast London suburban lines in November 1960. Interestingly, the Group Standard 'N7s' were left-hand drive, so the Westinghouse pump is on the fireman's side, and their profile was such that they could operate on the Metropolitan City Widened Lines. K W Wightman







Left: In contrast to the suburban duties calling at Bethnal Green, another of which is seen topping the bank on the left, this February 28, 1959 view records British Railways 'Britannia' Pacific No 70034 *Thomas Hardy* passing the station with the 9.45am Norwich to Liverpool Street service. A former Stratford engine, from late January 1959 through to mid-March 1961 it was based at Norwich, advances in dieselization thereafter forcing it away to pastures new, initially March and then to the London Midland Region in March 1963. R C Riley

Bottom left: About 2½ miles beyond Bethnal Green is Stratford, where in October 1958 we find Gresley 'K3' Mogul No 61801 at the head of a Liverpool Street to Ipswich passenger duty, while Brush 'Type 2' A1A-A1A No D5514 muscled into shot on the right. Dating back to June 1920 as Great Northern Railway 'H4' No 1001, the 2-6-0 left pure GNR territory when moving from Colwick in the summer of 1954, thereafter operating on the joint line through Lincoln before seeing out its days on the Great Eastern Section, with withdrawal in April 1962. The diesel is virtually branch new, being delivered in July 1958 and going on to manage 18 years and 3 months of service. K W Wightman

Below: Steam-hauled services proved to be more enduring on the former GER line to North Woolwich, this view of Thompson 'L1' class 2-6-4T No 67724 being recorded just north of Canning Town station on March 31, 1962. Manor Road is on the right and photographer Dick Riley is on the footbridge at the end of Star Lane, the location long since changed through the loss of steam services in September 1962, which were traditionally allied to Palace Gates duties and used the Low Level lines at Stratford, and ultimately the loss of heavy rail through here in the bid to serve the London Olympics of 2012 with efficient public transport. Star Lane Docklands Light Railway station is now at this location, with the Jubilee line on its west side, running alongside, so four tracks exist but not as we knew it! R C Riley



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Merthyr and its sub-sheds

D K Jones looks at the allocation at Merthyr's GWR-built engine shed, its predecessors and at its three sub-sheds – Rhymney, Dowlais Cae Harris and Dowlais Central – over the years from the 1920s until closure, together with an insight into their duties in the 1950s.

At one time Merthyr was one of the main industrial centres of Great Britain and possibly the world, due to the production of iron at the works of Cyfartha, Plymouth, Dowlais and Pen-y-darren in the 18th and early 19th centuries. However, iron-ore was not the area's only industry as it was also rich in coal reserves, limestone, and timber. With all this mineral traffic to be moved to the docks for export and around Great Britain, it was a natural progression for railways to take over from the established canals, several railway companies going on to serve Merthyr – the Brecon & Merthyr, the Vale of Neath, the Taff Vale, the Rhymney, the Great Western, the London & North Western and the London, Midland & Scottish. Only three of these actually built engine sheds in Merthyr itself, but the Brecon & Merthyr Railway had a shed at nearby Dowlais (Central), about 2½ miles to the north, and the L&NWR built one immediately to the north of there, at Ivor Junction, although the latter was closed as early as 1898.

A pre-grouping era Railway Clearing House map covers much of the domain of Merthyr-based locomotives, and all the locations within this feature, whilst giving an historic backdrop to the routes. The Vale of Neath line was by this stage amalgamated within the GWR, but the other railways were independent. The companies are shown thus: yellow – GWR; red – L&NWR; blue – B&MR; green – TVR; pink – Rhymney Railway; orange – Barry Railway; dark blue – Cardiff Railway; purple – Alexandra (Newport & South Wales) Docks & Railway. Between Merthyr, Dowlais and Rhymney, all homes for Merthyr-allocated engines by BR days, most routes south to Cardiff saw Merthyr-allocated engines as a matter of course. R N Smith Collection

Even on a day in mid-summer 1958, July 10, the location of Dowlais Cae Harris shed looks bleak and desolate, surrounded by the legacy of a century or more of coal mining. Looking east, the high land beyond the shed was once the home of coal mines, while behind the photographer was a massive industrial complex that included coke ovens, a brickworks and the Dowlais iron and steel works, the bracket signal near the engine shed locating the arriving Taff Bargoed Joint line (ex-GWR and Rhymney Railway) that served these sites, in part by linking to mineral railways. Via other routes the L&NWR and Brecon & Merthyr railways were likewise beneficiaries of the incoming and outgoing industrial traffic. The view shows the Cae Harris gantry coaling plant, which was constructed in 1957, not too long before the shed closed – prior to that, coaling was done from a primitive stage by the side of the running tracks. The engine crews and shed staff must have been a tough breed to survive the extreme winter temperatures at this exposed site. H C Casserley



A 1905 Ordnance Survey of Merthyr shows the site of two engine sheds, and the ex-Vale of Neath (GWR) passenger terminus is left-centre near the top. The company's two-road engine shed is still shown – despite a three-road GWR replacement being erected on the site in 1877 – on the east side of the incoming route just south of the station yards, immediately below 'The Court', and with its turntable just to the south. The TVR shed is west of this, with a turntable on the west side of the two-road engine shed, and Plymouth Street station to its right. The viaduct immediately south of this takes the Vale of Neath 'Merthyr Branch' over the Taff Vale route from Cardiff, the junction at its north end – Mardy Junction – being at the northern end of the short TVR/GWR link from Brandy Bridge Junction that connected the disparate systems and allowed closure of some TVR facilities – passenger station on August 1, 1877, and the engine shed in 1923.

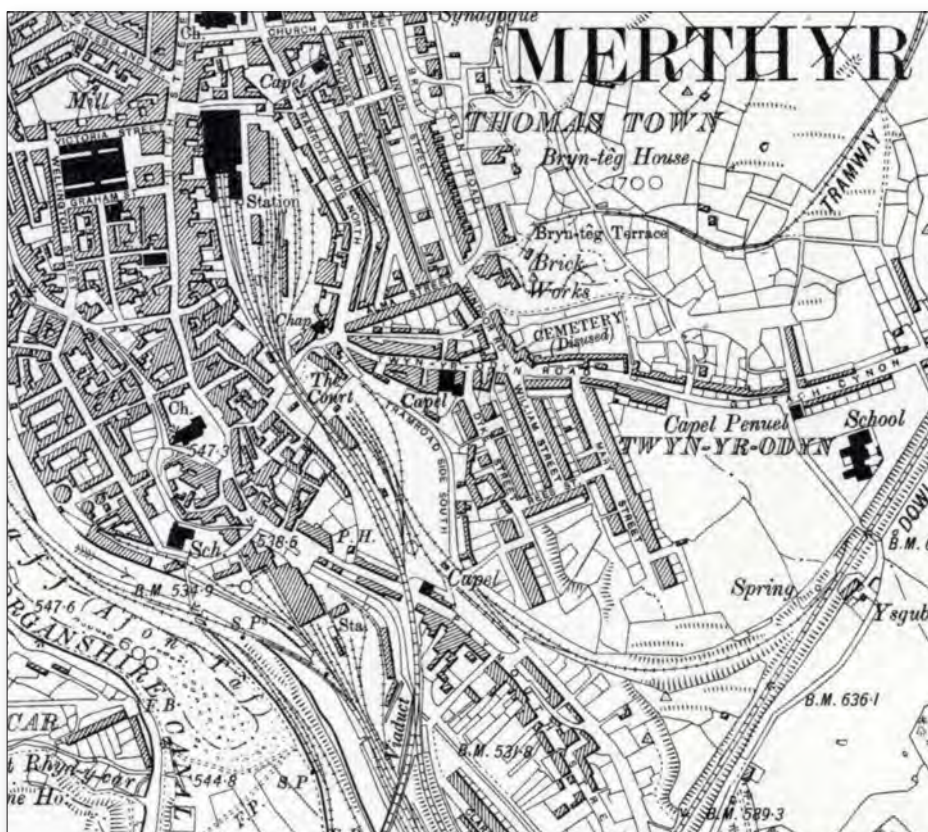
Crown Copyright

Whilst this is not by any means a definitive history of the engine sheds in the Merthyr area, it gives an insight into the amount of railway activity that went on around the Merthyr hub up to the mid-1960s. Regrettably, I could not locate anyone who used to work at or around the engine sheds in the area, the consequence of this being that a lot of stories about these sheds are lost forever. Up until 2018, the only railway activities around Merthyr were the two passenger trains an hour from the much changed Merthyr Tydfil station, a basic modern station south of the Merthyr (High Street) site, one going to Barry Island and the other to Bridgend, whilst a little to the east the Taff Bargoed line from Ystrad Mynach to Cwm Bargoed (1,250ft above sea level) is still in use today – three or four freight trains per day work up to Fros-y-Fran opencast coal site, where it is hoped to extract 12,000,000 tons of Welsh dry steam coal.

The engine sheds

Merthyr (Taff Vale Railway)

The Taff Vale Railway (TVR) built a two-road dead-end shed with a slated pitch roof that



opened on April 12, 1841 but had a short life – it was closed in January 1846 when replaced by a similar style building; it was situated by the Taff Vale Railway station at Plymouth Street, Merthyr. The replacement facilities included a coal stage, water tank, turntable, and a small repair shop. Fortunately a new TVR/GWR connection (Brandy Bridge Junction to Mardy Junction) was made in 1877 between the TVR line south of Plymouth Street, and the former Vale of Neath Railway station that became Merthyr (High Street). Merthyr's second ex-TVOR engine shed was closed by the Great Western Railway on September 1, 1923 when locomotive operation was concentrated at the GWR-built engine shed. However, the former Taff Vale shed remained largely intact and was

used to stable locomotives, in particular during the refurbishment and improvement at Merthyr's GWR engine shed during 1931/32.

Merthyr (Vale of Neath)

After arriving at Merthyr from Hirwaun in 1853, the Vale of Neath Railway originally stabled its locomotives under the station canopy at its Merthyr, High Street station, although this practice ceased upon opening of a two-road dead-end building later in 1853. The facilities included a coal stage and a turntable. The company was absorbed by the GWR by Act of 1866, and the former Vale of Neath Railway engine shed in Merthyr was closed by the GWR when locomotives were transferred to the company's own Merthyr shed around 1877, which was sited a little to the south, on the down (east side) of the former Vale of Neath line.



Pre-grouping, the Vale of Neath terminus of Merthyr (High Street) saw locomotives of five railway companies, this circa 1905 view records Rhymney Railway No 64, one of a class of five 2-4-2Ts of 1890, ready for departure. The RR reached Merthyr in 1886 via joint railway that ran from just west of Quakers Yard (High Level) station, through Aberfan on the west side of the river Taff, to Joint Line Junction on the south side of Merthyr – it linked the cross-valleys route from Pontypool Road with the Vale of Neath Railway's Merthyr branch, albeit in GWR days, and was a joint GWR and Rhymney Railway undertaking, so any shed visit within Merthyr would be to the GWR premises. The passenger service included trains through to Cardiff but was withdrawn from February 12, 1951 when most of the line was shut, although some operations on the northern section continued into 1960. No 64 was soon classified 'L', but more significantly it ran as an 0-6-2T from 1911 until withdrawn in March 1923.

J W Braithwaite/V R Webster Collection/
Kidderminster Railway Museum

About 15 or so years later, Merthyr Tydfil station hosts TVR Cameron 'A' class 0-6-2T No 149 (later GWR No 376) at the head of a passenger train. This locomotive was completed by Hawthorn, Leslie & Co Ltd in May 1920, with most of the fleet of 58 (collectively built by five outside manufacturers) already by then in service. The Taff Vale was the first public passenger railway to reach Merthyr, with extension of the Cardiff to Navigation House, Abercynon main line in April 1841, and it maintained its own engine shed in the town throughout its independence, but opted to move its passenger operation from Plymouth Street to High Street in 1877. Ultimately this 0-6-2T served until January 1957. J E Kite/V R Webster Collection/Kidderminster Railway Museum



The Brecon & Merthyr Railway used Merthyr's Vale of Neath terminus upon extension from Cefn to Rhydyar Junction on August 1, 1848, negotiating running rights with the GWR, so any servicing needs would likewise be at the GWR shed, this view of B&MR 0-6-0ST No 17 being taken at the former Vale of Neath engine shed site around the time of the grouping. Completed by Sharp, Stewart & Co Ltd in 1881 as one of a pair, with No 11 (later No 18), they were the oldest B&MR locomotives absorbed by the GWR on July 1, 1922. They soon found themselves at Swindon Works for inspection, which was followed by some 'Swindonization', and after nearly 3½ years they emerged as pannier tanks. The pictured engine was eventually withdrawn as GWR No 2190 in May 1934.

W H Smith Collection/Kidderminster Railway Museum

Merthyr (GWR)

This engine shed was opened in 1877 and was to the south of the High Street station. It consisted of a three-road dead-end building and facilities included a coal stage and a turntable, the latter at the south end of the site, near to the shed throat. In 1931 the depot was lengthened by 45ft and the layout improved, with a larger coal stage and a 55ft turntable that was re-sited to a position adjacent to the shed building on its east side. From nationalisation in 1948, this engine

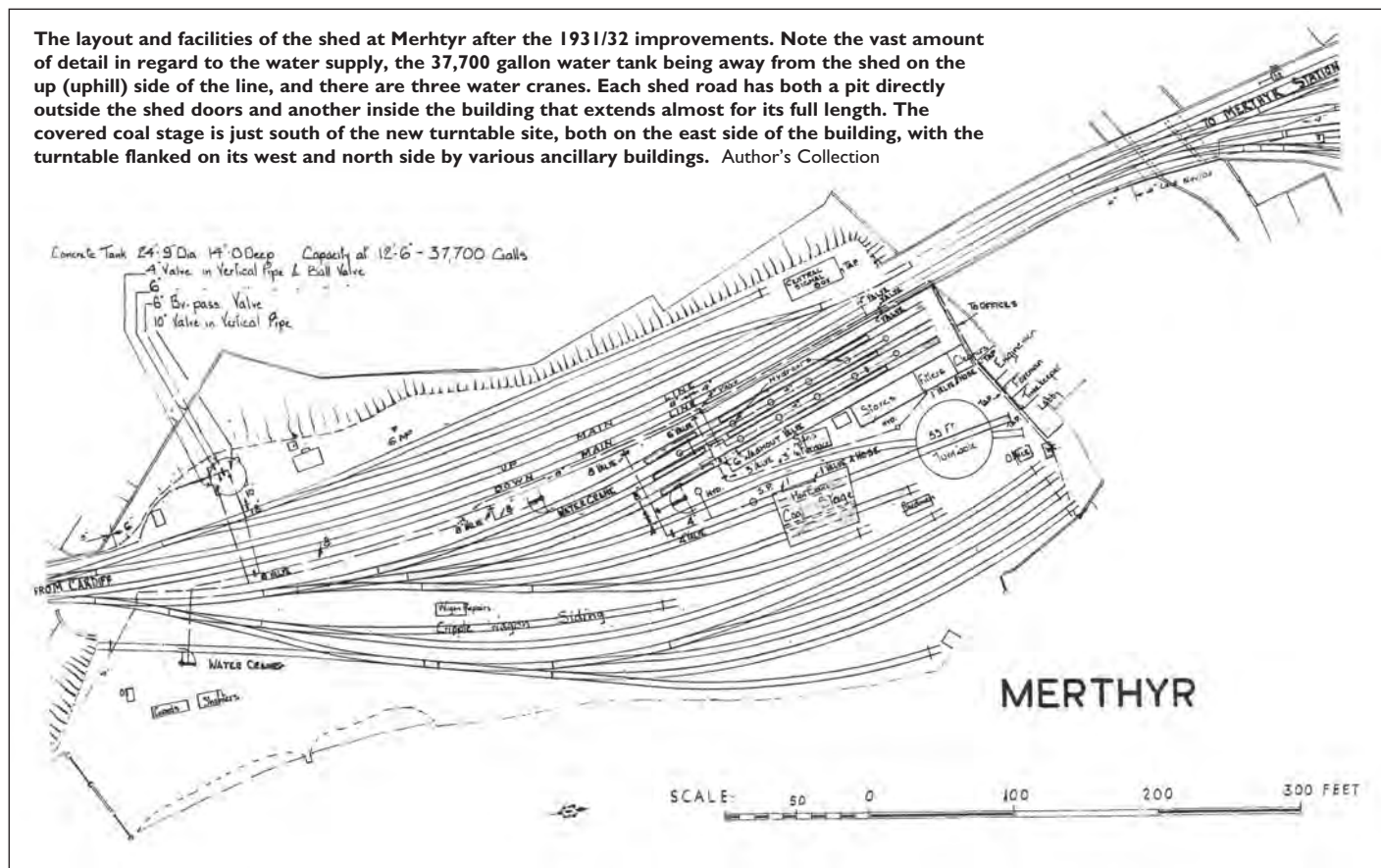
shed was coded 88D and it lasted until closed on November 2, 1964. It was later let out for industrial use but is now lost. The engine shed was an easy ten-minute walk from Merthyr (High Street) station, and the shed and yard were quite visible from a train, and consequently only engines right inside the building would not be recorded. This was not a major problem as the locomotive allocation at Merthyr generally consisted of long-term residents and did not vary to any great extent.

Merthyr's former Vale of Neath Railway two-road engine shed was replaced in 1877 by a three-road Great Western Railway building on the same site, which is seen in 1930. Its slated, northlight pattern roof had nine pitches until its 1931/32 extension. The 45ft added at the north end saw the number of pitches increased to 12. The same period saw the yard layout improved, with a larger coal stage, seen on the right, and a re-sited 55ft turntable. The shed retained this layout until its closure in November 1964. In view are engines typical of the allocation at this time, an 0-6-0PT and an 0-6-2T ahead of the shed, and that on the far right is probably '517' class 0-4-2T No 574, which was a shed resident from at least 1921.

Author's Collection



The layout and facilities of the shed at Merthyr after the 1931/32 improvements. Note the vast amount of detail in regard to the water supply, the 37,700 gallon water tank being away from the shed on the up (uphill) side of the line, and there are three water cranes. Each shed road has both a pit directly outside the shed doors and another inside the building that extends almost for its full length. The covered coal stage is just south of the new turntable site, both on the east side of the building, with the turntable flanked on its west and north side by various ancillary buildings. Author's Collection



An overview

The terrain worked by Merthyr-based locomotives was a challenge for the engines and their crews, as quite severe gradients were encountered, which sometimes involved the need for banking engines. A few of these are as follows:

Abercynon to Quakers Yard – 1 in 38 for five chains and 1 in 42 for 69 chains.

Brandy Bridge Junction to Merthyr (High Street) station – 1 in 40 for ten chains, and 1 in 59 for 14 chains.

Ffaldcaiaich to Bedlinog – 1 in 42 for 48 chains and 1 in 43 for 1 mile 60 chains.

Bedlinog to Cwmbargoed – Over a distance of 5 miles 1 chain the gradients were between 1 in 40 and 1 in 49.

Ffosyfran and Terminus Steel Works branch – 1 in 36 for 58 chains.

In addition to its everyday duties, over the years Merthyr engine shed hosted locomotives from a few rail tours, such as on May 12, 1956 when the Gloucestershire Railway Society organised a South Wales rail tour that

involved 'Dean Goods' class 0-6-0 No 2538; on January 5, 1958 when the Stephenson Locomotive Society celebrated the last train from Merthyr to Abergavenny, using former London & North Western Railway locomotives Nos 49121 and 58926, a 'G2A' 0-8-0 and a Webb 'Coal Tank' 0-6-2T; and on May 2, 1964 when GWR locomotives Nos 3690 and 4555, a '5700' 0-6-0PT and '4500' 2-6-2T, worked the last train to Brecon.

In the 1920s, passenger departures from Merthyr comprised five trains north to Pontsticill Junction, six heading east over the

From dated photographs it is clear that a major rebuild of Merthyr's shed roof was undertaken sometime between July 1935 and August 1948 (thought to be circa 1936/37) the change to gable ends evident in this September 15, 1963 scene. In addition, the building now has an exhaust channel throughout the length of each road, aiding the clearance of smoke and steam, and linked to three rows of 11 air vents along the roofline. However, with no windows, little in the way of natural light penetrated the interior. It also appears that there has been some re-pointing to the older part of the building. Outside the shed is '5700' class 0-6-0PT No 3761, a visitor from Llanelly. By this stage a Sunday shed bash such as this might result in ten sightings, and another pannier tank is by the coal stage. Looking north, High Street station is visible, signalling changes sometime between April 1959 and June 1961 seeing the erection of the signal gantry near the shed entrance for the station approach signals. Author's Collection





This general view of Merthyr (High Street) station was taken on May 12, 1956 when 'Dean Goods' 0-6-0 No 2538 was at the head of the 'South Wales Rail Tour', which was organised by the Gloucestershire Railway Society. The ticket for this trip read 'Gloucester Central to Neath General and back', and it was booked to travel via Severn Tunnel Junction to Newport, Aberbeeg, Brynmawr and Merthyr, so reaching the latter via the L&NWR route. Pictured after servicing, the 'Dean Goods' awaits the train's return to Gloucester via a somewhat indirect route that included (in advertised order) Treherbert, Pontypridd, Caerphilly, St Fagans, Cardiff (General) and Newport (High Street). Author's Collection

On January 5, 1958 the Stephenson Locomotive Society arranged a last train rail tour between Abergavenny and Merthyr and back, using Webb 'Coal Tank' 0-6-2T No 58926 and 'Super D' 0-8-0 No 49121, both former L&NWR engines. Outward deviations were to Ebbw Vale (High Level) and Rhymney, and both involved propelling the train back up to the core route before continuing west. The 'Coal Tank', the pilot engine, is shown on the 55ft turntable alongside Merthyr shed while carrying an appropriate headboard and a wreath – it gained the latter during a stop at Rhymney Bridge. Given the limited daylight hours, most photographs are of the outward journey, the booked time in Merthyr being between 3.45pm and 4.30pm. Author's Collection



L&NWR line to Abergavenny, eight trains going west to Hirwaun, 11 heading south on the Taff Vale Railway line to Cardiff, and six using the GWR/Rhymney Railway Joint line, which took southbound trains on the opposite (east) side of the valley to Quakers Yard, and then to Penalltau Junction for Ystrad Mynach and Cardiff via the Rhymney Railway's main line. By the early 1950s the frequency of these workings had changed to 2, 4, 9, 20 and none respectively. Merthyr shed's workings probably began to decline in importance for a number of reasons: diesel-multiple-units took

Six years later, on May 2, 1964 the SLS (Midland Area) ran a special last train from Cardiff to Brecon (Free Street). Collett '5600' No 6606 was used on the opening leg to Merthyr, but from Merthyr (High Street) the engines were locally-allocated Collett '5700' 0-6-0PT No 3690 and preserved Churchward '4500' class 2-6-2T No 4555. Prior to taking over the trip for departure at 12.30pm, the footplate crews from both engines stand in front of No 4555 at Merthyr shed. Third from the left is Dewi Williams, and it is thought that the other men are Les Sheen, Bill James and Bill Gallieozzie. Author's Collection





Having ascended the gruelling climb from Talybont-on-Usk to Torpantau tunnel, one of the steepest and longest continuous grades in Britain, on May 2, 1964 the return leg of the 'Last Train to Brecon' rail tour takes a breather at Pontsticill Junction – a former Brecon & Merthyr Railway station that is now the important mid-way point on the narrow gauge Brecon Mountain Railway. The GWR-liveried 2-6-2T heads the train, with Merthyr's No 3690 tucked inside. The signalling and pointwork at the south end of the station are for the diverging Pontsticill loop, at the feet of the photographer and the outward route from Merthyr via Cefn Coed. The road is set to Pant and Dowlais (Central), the destination of this train, so en route it will cross the junction for the Pant & Bargoed line, a route that met the Rhymney Railway as an end-on junction at Deri. Author's Collection

over passenger workings between Barry Island, Cardiff and Merthyr during 1957/58; the closure of the former L&NWR line to Abergavenny in January 1958; the end of services to Hirwaun in 1962, and closure of the line to Pontsticill and Brecon in 1964.

Merthyr's shed's locomotive allocation was usually around 50 engines, mainly of the 0-6-2T and 0-6-0PT varieties, but only approximately 23 engines were based at Merthyr, the others being at sub-sheds – Rhymney (18 engines) Dowlais Cae Harris (eight engines) and Dowlais Central (two engines), although the latter three were sheds in their own right until January 1948.

Merthyr shed's locomotive allocations

1921

0-4-2T: 574

0-6-0PT: 1635, 2058, 2098 and 2141

1934

2-4-0T: 1495

0-4-2T: 1470 and 1486

0-6-2T: 344, 5661, 5671, 5672, 5677, 5678, 6663

0-6-0PT: Nos 1247, 1707, 1721, 1827, 1838, 1873, 1878, 1887, 2066, 2732, 2750, 2760, 2766, 2781, 5711, 5721, 5769, 6401, 7717, 7766, 7772, 8736

December 31, 1947

0-6-2T: 217, 5654, 5677 and 5698

0-6-0PT: 1878, 2760, 4632, 4635, 5711, 5721, 5769, 6408, 6427, 7717, 7766, 7772, 8736, 9618, 9643

November 2, 1964

0-6-2T: 5618, 5621, 5651, 5655, 5659, 5662, 5681, 5696, 6612, 6622, 6655, 6658, 6661 and 6691

0-6-0PT: 3690, 4675, 9631, 9649 and 9679

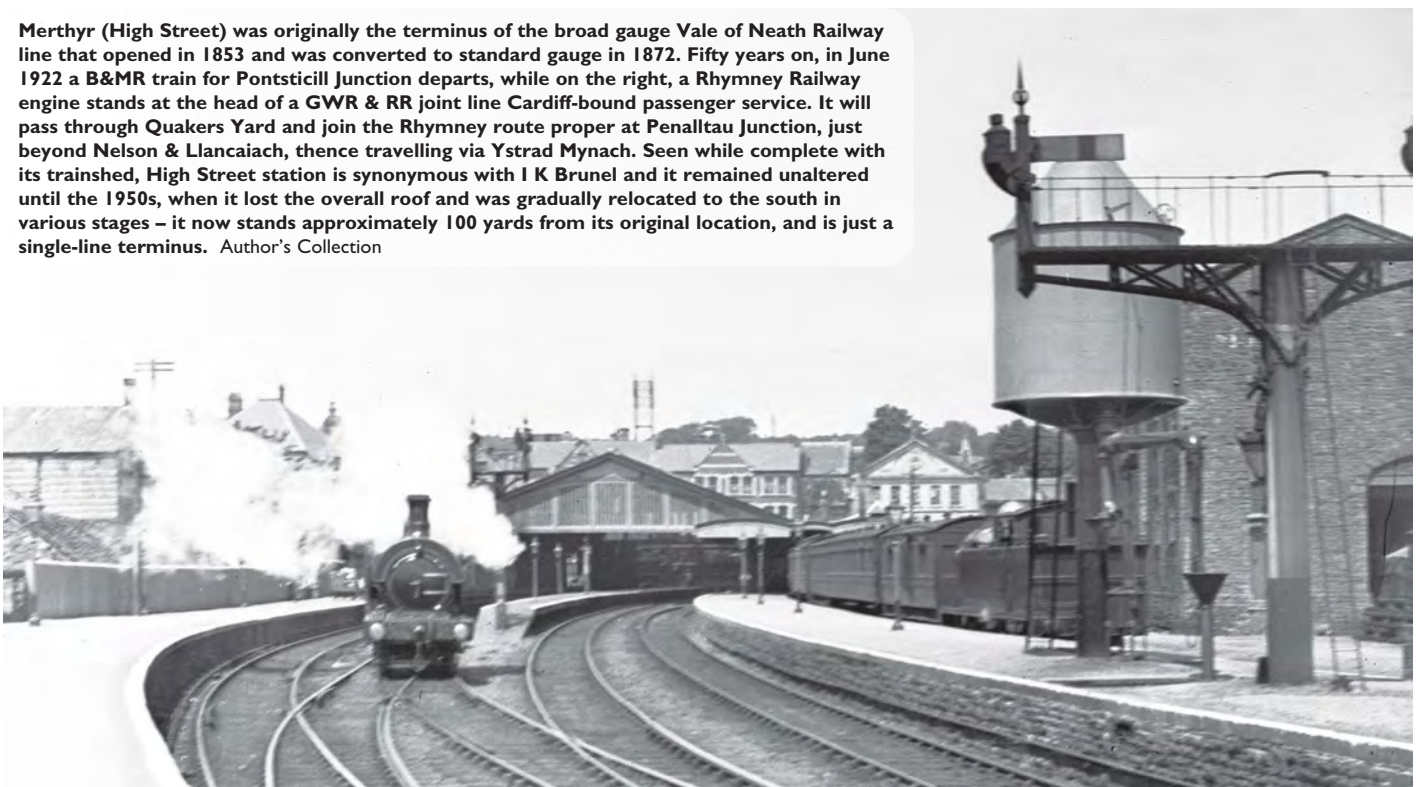
It is likely that most of the 0-6-2Ts were at Rhymney and Dowlais (Cae Harris) at this time.

Between 1921 and 1934 the duties of Merthyr's shed certainly increased, as is evident by the increased locomotive allocation. The '6400' class 0-6-0PTs were usually used on auto-train working and were long-term residents at the shed, the last two, Nos 6416 and 6433, being withdrawn from the shed in 1963, No 6433 in the January and No 6416 in the September.

Sunday, April 20, 1958 saw the following locomotives on shed – Nos 3681, 4616, 4630, 4632, 4635, 4690, 5626, 5661, 5677, 6423, 6427, 6433, 6436, 7717, 7766, 9618, 9638, 9643, 9747, and also Nos 82041 and 82044, both shedded at Barry (88C).

A later visit to the shed, on Sunday, June 19, 1960 saw the following engines – Nos 3728, 4632, 4635, 5626, 5661, 5677, 6433, 6436, 6682, 9618, 9643, 9675, 9676 and 9776, all locally-based locomotives apart from No 3728 (Hereford) and No 6682 (Radyr).

Merthyr (High Street) was originally the terminus of the broad gauge Vale of Neath Railway line that opened in 1853 and was converted to standard gauge in 1872. Fifty years on, in June 1922 a B&MR train for Pontsticill Junction departs, while on the right, a Rhymney Railway engine stands at the head of a GWR & RR joint line Cardiff-bound passenger service. It will pass through Quakers Yard and join the Rhymney route proper at Penalltau Junction, just beyond Nelson & Llancaiach, thence travelling via Ystrad Mynach. Seen while complete with its trainshed, High Street station is synonymous with I K Brunel and it remained unaltered until the 1950s, when it lost the overall roof and was gradually relocated to the south in various stages – it now stands approximately 100 yards from its original location, and is just a single-line terminus. Author's Collection





Carrying the 'MA' target to denote its duty number, Merthyr-allocated Collett '5600' class 0-6-2T No 5661 enters Cardiff (Queen Street) station in 1953 with a Barry Island to Merthyr (High Street) passenger service. After the station call, this train will diverge left and take former TVR metals to Merthyr via Taffs Well, Abercynon, and Merthyr Vale. Transferred to Merthyr shed from Cardiff (Cathays) during October 1950, the move proved to be long-standing, the 0-6-2T's withdrawal from Merthyr shed finally coming about in July 1962.
S Rickard/J & J Collection

Merthyr shed provided the motive power for auto-train workings from Merthyr to Hirwain via the 2,497 yard Merthyr tunnel on the Vale of Neath Railway's Merthyr branch. This west-facing view from 1960 records Collett '6400' 0-6-0PT No 6433 having arrived at Hirwain and awaiting the departure time for its return home, propelling the auto-coach. These workings would last until 1962, when the line was closed, supposedly due to the condition of the tunnel. A glimpse at the station nameboard confirms that Hirwain is the junction station for Merthyr, the main route being the cross-valleys link from Pontypool Road, Quakers Yard and Aberdare that continued beyond here to Neath. Author's Collection

Engine shed operations

Prior to the improvements during 1931/32, the following instructions were adhered to: Incoming locomotives, after ash dropping, pass under a coaling shelter. Coaling is effected by loading coal from wagons at yard level into half-ton coal skips carried on track situated close alongside the coal wagon road. By this means a number of skips can be loaded and positioned near the crane. The crane is of 1 ton capacity; electrically operated. The empty tubs, on being lowered on to the trolley, can be pushed past the crane and positioned opposite a second wagon for loading. The shelter, which spans the ash wagon and loco roads, along with the narrow



gauge track, equals the length of two wagons. Coal consumption is 213 tons per week, and ashes load four wagons per week.

Water for boiler washing and loco purposes is obtained by gravitation from a tunnel and is stored in a 37,700 gallon tank. An emergency supply from the corporation

main is laid to the tank, and from this source is the drinking water supply. The staff at Merthyr engine shed, circa 1935, was as follows – supervisors (3), clerical (3), drivers (41), firemen (42), cleaners (11), shed grades (22), fitters and mates (11), boilermasters and mates (2).

Another Collett '6400' 0-6-0PT from the local shed, No 6423 of September 1935, leaves Merthyr station with the 12.46pm auto-train to Abergavenny on November 30, 1957. Although ultimately heading east, the exit from Merthyr was initially southwest, but soon diverging north from the Merthyr branch at Rhydyar Junction and through to Morlais Junction on a section of B&MR and L&NWR joint route, with ex-L&NWR/LMS metals thereafter. Sadly this heavily-graded and picturesque route would close in January 1958, with No 6423 condemned from Merthyr during the following summer.
S C L Philips/D K Jones Collection





Collett '5600' 0-6-2T No 5686, from Abercynon shed but working Merthyr turn 'JD', enters Merthyr Vale station with the 1pm Barry Island to Merthyr (High Street) stopping train on Thursday, March 6, 1958. This is the Taff Vale route to Merthyr, the GWR & Rhymney Joint line (by this stage closed as a through route) through Aberfan station being on the opposite (west) side off the valley. The local colliery at Merthyr Vale was infamous in relation to the Aberfan disaster of October 1966 when tip No 7 on the mountainside slipped, engulfing Pant Glas school and tragically causing the deaths of 116 children and 28 adults. Although many locomotive turns, particularly passenger duties, remained largely unchanged for many years until the times of closure and dieselization of the mid- to late-1950s, others were redrafted to meet changing needs, and it seems that around this time duty 'JD' included some goods work after 6pm. Author's Collection

Merthyr shed's trip workings (1957/58)

M4:

12.25am Mondays excepted (MX) – off shed at
12.10am – work a freight to Radyr Junction.
11.05pm Saturdays only (SO) – off shed at
10.50pm – work Merthyr to Stormstown.

JD:

6pm – work Merthyr to Stormstown; engine off
the 3.42pm Pontypridd to Merthyr train.

MPI:

5.10am MX off shed for shunting Merthyr
(Plymouth Street Goods) and B&M Junction;
trip to Quakers Yard at 11am. Turn duration: 15
hours Monday to Friday, 13 hours on Saturday.

Reference to documentation provides
further insight:

Working of trains between Merthyr and Brandy Bridge Junction

'When trains or pilot trips are being worked from
Merthyr to Brandy Bridge or vice versa, two brake
vans, one at each end, should when possible, be
provided. If this is not practicable, the brake van

may be attached in front, providing there is an
engine coupled to the train, assisting in the rear;
in the up direction the guard rides on the rear
engine.'

Working between Brandy Bridge Junction and Plymouth Street Yard

'Engines or trains consisting of a few wagons may
work over either line between Brandy Bridge and
the goods shed, but before a train is allowed to
proceed over the wrong line from Brandy Bridge
to the yard the signalman must have an
understanding with the shunter at Merthyr Yard.
Before a train is allowed to leave the yard for
Brandy Bridge on the wrong line the shunter must
obtain permission from the signalman at Brandy
Bridge.'

Working passenger trains, Merthyr

'When it is necessary to admit a train to platform
1, 2 or 3 during fog or falling snow and the line
over which the train is required to run is not clear
to the stop block, the train must be brought to a
stand at Merthyr station up main inner home
signals and must be piloted from that point to the
platform by the inspector or shunter on duty.'

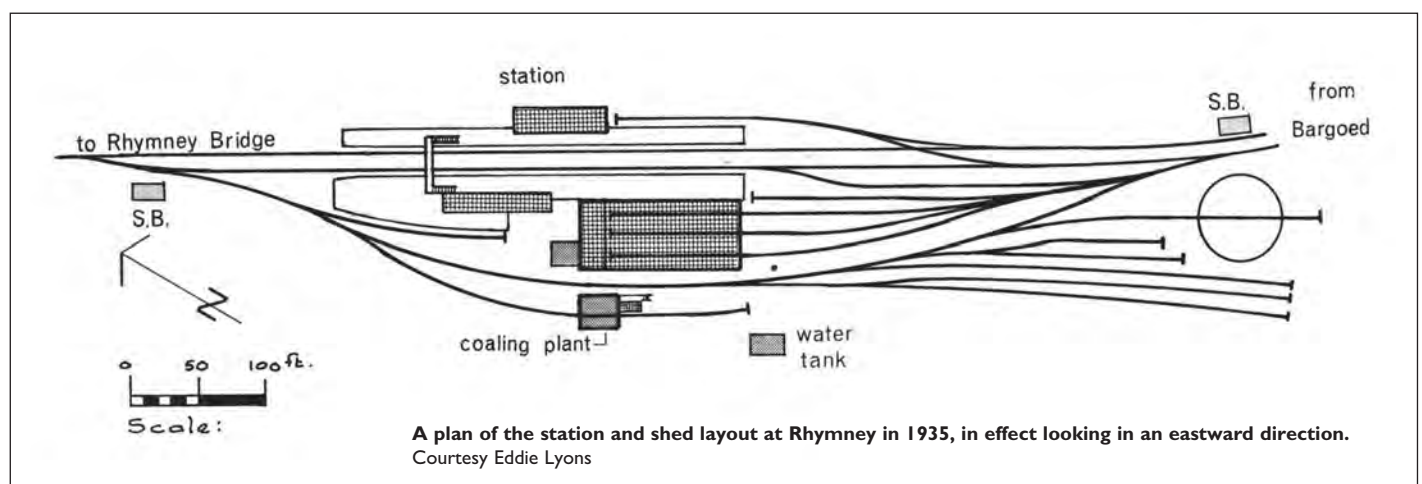
Working of passenger trains, Merthyr to Central Wales Line

'Trains from Merthyr to Tallylyn Junction via
Ponsticill Junction must not exceed 630ft in
length and 260 tons in weight, the load for two
engines.

In no circumstances must passenger trains from
Merthyr for the direction of Tallylyn Junction be
worked by more than two engines.'

Sub-sheds: Rhymney

Originally built by the Rhymney Railway,
circa 1864, this was a three-road dead-end
shed with a slated gable-style pitched roof.
The facilities included a coal stage and a
turntable. Despite being a parent depot for the
Rhymney Railway and GWR, under British
Railways it became a sub-shed to Merthyr
from January 1948. However, it was
subsequently coded 88D in its own right
when the main engine shed at Merthyr closed
in November 1964; Merthyr was formerly
88D. This parent shed status proved short-
lived, only lasting until April 1965. Access to
the shed was from the end of the station
platform at Rhymney.



Like on many of the valleys' routes, it was generally the case that locomotives on the Rhymney main line faced uphill, so photographs of the south-facing three-road shed at Rhymney are generally bunker-first, but on June 6, 1953 there is variety. On the left is Collett '5100' class 2-6-2T No 4143 – a Merthyr engine since November 1951 – while on the middle road is former Rhymney Railway Riches 'P' class 0-6-2T No 6 of 1909 as renumbered and rebuilt by the GWR; it became GWR No 83 and has a Standard No 10 Swindon boiler. Likewise much rebuilt at Swindon is No 393, on the right, which started life as Taff Vale 'A' class No 406 and was new from Hawthorn, Leslie in November 1920. In the final years leading up to the grouping, 0-6-2Ts already dominated operations in the South Wales valleys, and the GWR continued this practice, rebuilding many engines and building the Collett '5600' fleet. Frank Hornby



Rhymney shed's allocation of about 18 locomotives was generally of the 0-6-2T type, but for more than six years in the 1950s it also had 2-6-2T tanks for working the intensive Rhymney-Penarth passenger service. All their Prairie tanks were re-allocated after the introduction of diesel-multiple-units on valley lines' passenger services.

Rhymney shed: allocation and work

1934

0-6-2T: 34, 39, 42, 46, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 136, 141, 5655, 5660, 5683, 5690, 5692, 5696

December 31, 1947

2-6-2T: 5128

0-6-2T: 39, 67, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 370, 375, 5635, 5660, 5678, 5683, 5692, 5696

From December 1951 through to April 1958 Prairie tanks were allocated to Rhymney

shed. A visit on Sunday, May 26, 1957 found 2-6-2Ts Nos 4143 and 4160-64 and hand, along with '5600' class 0-6-2Ts Nos 5603 5635, 5650, 5652, 5655, 5662, 5672 and 5696.

In a subsequent visit, on Sunday, June 19, 1960, the following locomotives were noted on shed: Nos 5603, 5605, 5622, 5630, 5636, 5660, 5662, 5671, 5674 and 5691, all '5600' 0-6-2Ts and all Merthyr (88D)-allocated except No 5691 of Treherbert (88F) shed.

April 1965

0-6-2T: 5605, 5621, 5655, 5659, 5677, 5681, 5688, 5696, 6612, 6691

Trip workings (1957/58)

D1:

Work Rhymney goods yard to Cardiff; engine off 3.40am Roath Basin Junction. Also shunting four-hours at Rhymney from 8.15am (2½ hours on a Saturday).

R2:

6.55am – off shed at 6.40am – work Rhymney to Ystrad Mynach, two turns; first turn relieved at Bargoed at 1.40pm.

R4:

8am – off shed at 7.45am – work Rhymney to Ystrad Mynach, two turns, first turn relieved at Bargoed at 2.45pm.

RF:

11.30am. Work Rhymney to Ystrad Mynach.

RD:

9.10am – off shed at 4.50am – work Rhymney to Ystrad Mynach.

4.30pm – off shed at 3.25pm – work Rhymney to Hengoed Junction.

Rhymney: shunting engines

Few Rhymney-based engines were dedicated to shunting duties, these turns being the regular exceptions:

RB:

6.50am Saturdays excluded (SX) – off shed at 4.25am – work 4.50am Rhymney to Taff Merthyr workmen's train, and then shunting at Nelson & Llancaiach for Newport Division.

6.50am Saturdays only (SO) – off shed at 4.50am – work 5.15am Rhymney to Taff Merthyr empty coaching stock.

RC:

No specific time. Shunting Bargoed Goods Yard for 1½ hours Monday to Saturday.

RD:

3.25pm. Shunting Rhymney for ½ hour Monday to Friday.

There is a rural atmosphere as Rhymney-based 2-6-2T No 4143 departs Llanishen with a Rhymney-bound 'stopper' on Tuesday, July 9, 1957. New to Bristol (Bath Road) shed in September 1946, this Prairie tank would ultimately be on the books of Merthyr shed for about 6½ years, outstationed at Rhymney until transferred to Radyr during the four week period ending May 17, 1958. Although still open, Llanishen station has long since lost its signal box and goods yard, the latter closing on June 27, 1966, its site now part of a car park for commuters. S Rickard/J & J Collection





A general view of Rhymney shed in 1963, notably including the signal box that was virtually off the end of the up platform, the shed being behind the west side of the station. Since the introduction of diesel-multiple-units for passenger duties in 1958 the shed had lost its allocation of Prairie tanks but still had a reasonable allocation of the ever-reliable 0-6-2Ts for coal traffic, albeit even this was to decline very rapidly due to the pit closure programme of the 1960s. Author's Collection

Rhymney Engineering Company's Sidings, Rhymney

'The berthing of this firm's traffic to be done between 9.30am and 10am, and the clearance between 3.15pm and 3.45pm. WR engines must not proceed beyond the engine stop board which is fixed near the diamond crossing.'

Although the number of pre-grouping engines at work in the valleys was by this time fast diminishing, on Saturday, April 27, 1957 we find the meeting of two goods workings at Bargoed in the Rhymney valley, these being headed by a pre-grouping 0-6-2T and one of its successors. On the left, No 38 emerged from the works of Hudswell, Clarke & Co Ltd in September 1921 as Rhymney Railway 'A' class No 42 – it awaits entry to Bargoed Pits with turn 'D7', while Collett '5600' No 5650, a Merthyr engine sub-shedded to Rhymney, departs with duty 'R2', the 6.55am Rhymney to Ystrad Mynach freight. No 5650 dates from January 1926 and would serve until June 1963, but No 38 was destined for withdrawal in October 1957. S Rickard/J & J Collection

Sub-sheds: Dowlais (Cae Harris)

This depot was generally a freight shed, but it did supply engines for working passenger trains from Cwm Bargoed to Dowlais (Cae Harris) and from Nelson & Llancaiach to Cardiff (Bute Road). Access to the shed was a couple of minutes walk from the station.

Dowlais (Cae Harris)

locomotive allocation and work

1934

0-6-2T: Nos 138, 139, 5647, 5652, 5653, 5654, 5668, 5694

December 31, 1947

0-6-2T: Nos 83, 211, 5652, 5653, 5666, 5671, 5674, 5694

A visit to the shed on Sunday, June 19, 1960 saw 0-6-2Ts Nos 5610, 5605, 5651, 5660 and 5696 on shed, all allocated to Merthyr (88D).

Dowlais (Cae Harris) Trip Workings (1957/58)

K1: 16 hours

7am – off shed at 6.45am – work Dowlais (Cae Harris) Furnace Top trips, Cwm Bargoed, Ffaldcaiach. On Saturdays runs 1.05pm empty coaching stock Dowlais to Bedlinog, 1.35pm Bedlinog to Nelson, and 1.56pm Nelson to Dowlais (Cae Harris).

K3: 16 hours

6.45am – off shed at 6.35am – work Dowlais (Cae Harris) to Ffaldcaiach, Cwm Bargoed and Aber Jn.

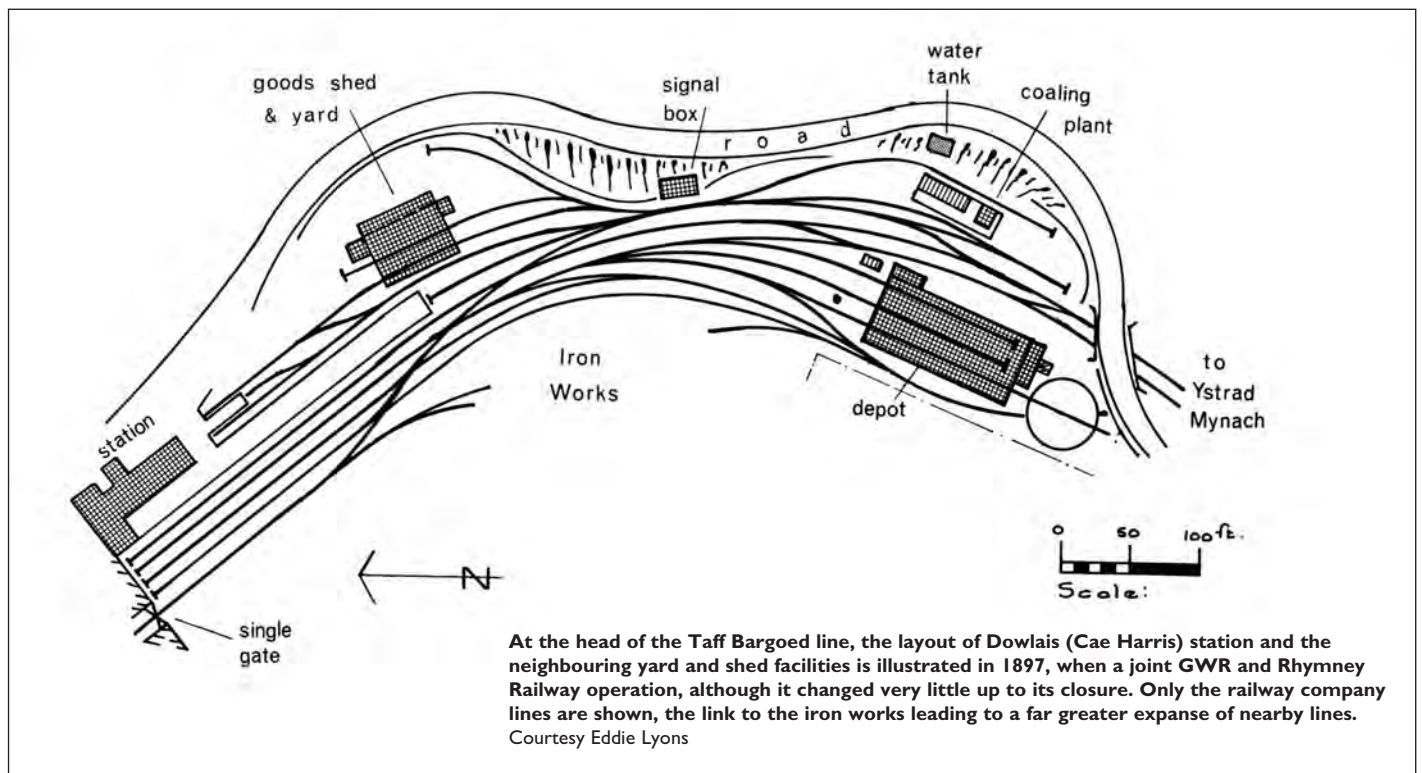
K5: 8 hours

8.30am – off shed at 8.20am – work Dowlais (Cae Harris) to Cwm Bargoed Steel Works Branch and then to Aber Junction, arrive 11.15am.

K6: 8 hours

Off shed at 9.55am, banking. Works 1.15pm SX Dowlais to Nelson and 2.41pm SX Nelson to Dowlais.





Special Instructions for Working Trains over steep inclines: Taff Bargoed Branch

'Trains from the direction of Llancaiach must in all cases come to a stand outside the junction signals at Dowlais Junction, whilst trains from the direction of Dowlais must be brought to a stand at the stop boards at Cwm Bargoed, Nantyffyn, and Ffaldcaich. The signalmen at Dowlais Junction and Ffaldcaich

signal boxes must not lower their signals for trains to proceed until the trains have been brought to stand in accordance with this instruction.

When a train is worked by one guard and no assistance is available at Dowlais Junction or Dowlais Yard, then trains for Dowlais or Furnace Top must not exceed 15 ten ton loaded vehicles or equivalent thereto.'

Engines to and from Turntable Sidings, Dowlais (Cae Harris)

'Whenever it is necessary for a light engine or an engine with vehicles attached to pass over the sidings leading to the turntable at Dowlais, it must be brought to a stand at the disc for No 3 shed road and the fireman and guard must go forward and see that the line is clear before proceeding.'

Viewed from the south end the Cae Harris terminus station, the sole occupant of Cae Harris shed on Wednesday, August 14, 1957 is Collett '5600' class 0-6-2T No 5660, which was a long-term resident – it had a brief spell at Abercynon in late 1953/early 1954 but was otherwise on the Merthyr books as early as June 1950 and almost through to its withdrawal in October 1964, although that act was carried out while briefly at Radyr. The right-hand road through the shed, and the line along its west side (occupied by the open wagon) are those serving the turntable. The inhospitable terrain is clearly shown and the incoming railway goes largely unseen – it curves southwest around the south end of the engines shed, so along the lower ground to the right of the view, making for Cwm Bargoed, Bedlinog and ultimately Nelson & Llancaiach. S Rickard/J & J Collection



Running through a sparsely-populated area, Cae Harris-based Collett '5600' class 0-6-2T No 5618 heads through Pantywaun cutting near Dowlais with the 12.45pm Dowlais (Cae Harris) to Cardiff passenger service on July 18, 1959 – the next stop will be Cwm Bargoed, an extremely exposed location that has proved to be the long-standing terminus of the Taff Bargoed line since it was cut-back from Cae Harris on October 3, 1983, although the whole line has been freight-only since June 15, 1964.
S C L Philips/Author's Collection

Another Collett '5600', No 5622, is seen near Bedlinog, quite possibly while working turn 'K1' or 'K3' from Dowlais Cae Harris shed, heading uphill with empty mineral wagons for Cwm Bargoed in 1964. The gradient to the south of here is 1 in 42/43, whilst beyond Bedlinog station the climb to Cwm Bargoed is relentless, just over five miles of between 1 in 40 and 1 in 49. While demanding on both the locomotive and crew in steam days, it is worth noting that the downhill journey takes its toll too, particularly on the brakes, and speed and tonnage of trains is key to a safe descent.
Author's Collection



Coal stage road and pit road, Dowlais (Cae Harris)
'Engines must not pass from the coal stage road or pit road foul of the up avoiding line at Dowlais without a hand signal from the signalman. The signalman must give the necessary signal upon the prescribed whistles being sounded.'

Dowlais Steel Works Branch

'The single line from Dowlais Junction to dead end Ffosyfron and from dead end Ffosyfron to Steel Works is worked in accordance with the instructions in the General Appendix headed 'Regulations for working single lines of railway by one engine in steam or two or more engines coupled together.' The train staff is square, painted red, and lettered Dowlais Junction and Steel Works Siding.'

Sub-sheds: Dowlais (Central)

Originally on Brecon & Merthyr Railway territory, the first shed opened was a basic

corrugated iron one-road shed – it was destroyed by a blizzard on March 27, 1916. The second shed was brick-built, probably to counteract the extreme weather conditions that could be encountered in the area. The shed was closed by British Railways in December 1964, as were the other two Merthyr sub-sheds. Access was a couple of minutes walk from the station.

Dowlais (Central): allocation and work

1934

0-6-2T: Nos 78 and 82

December 31, 1947

0-6-2T: No 292

On Sunday, September 14, 1958 0-6-0PTs Nos 3681 and 9747 were on shed, both of Merthyr, 88D.

Trip workings 1957/58

U1 – 5.00am (16 hours)

Work from Dowlais (Central) run 5.02am workmen's train to Bargoed, and the 6.40am return, thence under direction from Control.

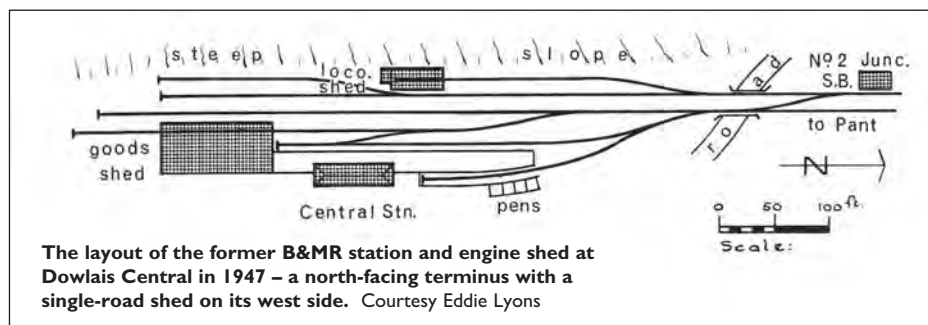
U2 – 11.15am

Off shed at 10am to Pontsticill; it also works 1pm workmen's train Dowlais to Bargoed and return, and the 9.20pm to Bargoed and return.

The times of these workings were to correspond with the day, afternoon, and night turns at the colliery.

ICI Factory, Dowlais (Central)

'In connection with the working of traffic for the ICI factory, WR engines may work over the two sidings situated between Dowlais No 1 and No 2 signal boxes and the fence road leading to Ivor Works up to the engine stop board 140 yards inside the private siding gate.





For the purpose of running around wagons on the two sidings, engines may proceed as far as Dowlais No 1 signal box but must not enter the limestone or ICI roads.'

A visit to Dowlais Central shed on July 21, 1935 finds former Rhymney Railway 0-6-2T No 78 taking cover, with very likely an unseen locomotive in the depths of the shed. The GWR absorbed 123 Rhymney locomotives at the grouping, this one dating from August 1921 and ultimately operating until August 1955. The final design of C T Hurry Riches, the 'AP' class amounted to just four 0-6-2Ts, all built by Hudswell, Clarke & Co Ltd, with this locomotive first operating as Rhymney Railway No 35; it was renumbered by the Great Western. W A Camwell/SLS Collection

Departing from Dowlais (Central) station with empty stock for Pant, this November 30, 1957 view records Collett '5600' 0-6-2T No 5681 drawing away from the platform. The large goods shed is beyond (to the south of) the station, while the engine shed is obscured by the rake of wagons on the right. A Merthyr engine by the end of 1954, No 5681 found gainful employment hereabouts through to the five weeks ending May 16, 1965, when it was finally withdrawn. The immediate mile or so to the east of here once boasted four stations: Dowlais Central (B&MR), Dowlais Cae Harris (GWR & Rhymney Railway), Dowlais High Street (L&NWR) and Dowlais Top (B&MR), but all would be gone from the passenger network come mid-June 1964. R M Casserley



STEAM DAYS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the preparation of this article I would like to thank Roger Griffiths, well-known co-author of *The Directory of British Engine Sheds*, who was always willing to provide information and help with my queries, and there were many. I am also grateful to Eddie Lyons for allowing me to reproduce shed plans of Dowlais Central and Cae Harris from his book, *An Historical Survey of GWR Engine Sheds: 1947*.

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Various Middleton Press publications
Shedbash UK Blogspot



Climbing to Pontsticill with a train of ICI ammonia tanks from the company's Dowlais plant is Merthyr-allocated Collett '5700' 0-6-0PT No 9747. The train will continue north via the B&MR route before taking the Hereford, Hay & Brecon branch through Three Cocks Junction. This particular pannier tank was a Merthyr asset from the autumn of 1954 through to the turn of 1962/63 when redeployed to work from Aberdare. Author's Collection

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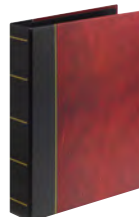
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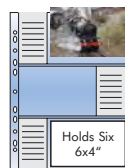
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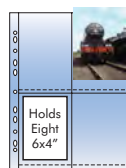
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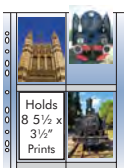
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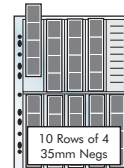
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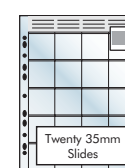
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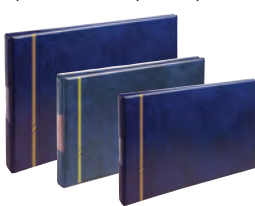
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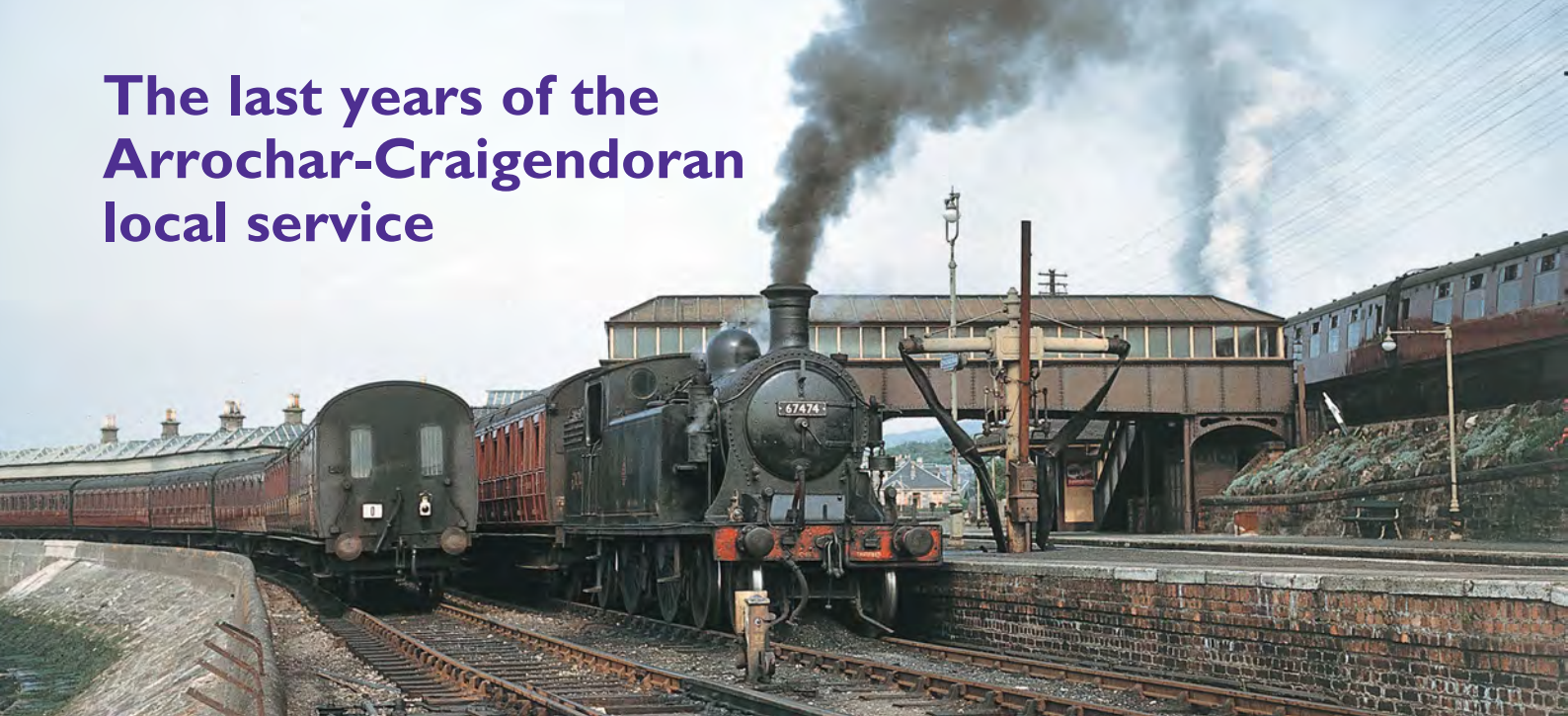


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The last years of the Arrochar-Craigendoran local service



Push-pull worked from 1940 to 1959, David Anderson and Andrew Kennedy review the local passenger duties on the southernmost 19½ miles of the West Highland line in British Railways days.

Reid 'C15' class 4-4-2T No 67474 stands at the pier/up bay platform at Craigendoran (Lower) station at the east end of its two-coach push-pull set for the service between here and Arrochar & Tarbet in July 1959. The footbridge spans the down and up Helensburgh lines, and to the far right is the Upper station for through West Highland line services, a down steam-hauled rake of BR Mark I coaches is in view. Also of note is the North Clydeside suburban stock stabled on the line beside the Clyde, part of the run-round to platform 1. The curve of the rake and that of the pier station canopy mirrors the route of the line to the piers. Also of note is the water column between platforms 1 and 2, its position at the Glasgow end of the station making it best suited for push-pull trains should they use platform 2 (they usually called at platform 1) and of course any departure from the pier line, which would remain open beyond the end of steam operations. Keith Pirt, courtesy Book Law Publications

Prior to their final replacement by a diesel railbus in April 1960, Glasgow (Eastfield)-allocated Reid 'C15' class 4-4-2Ts Nos 67460 and 67474 worked the local stopping passenger services on the former North British Railway and LNER route from Craigendoran on the north bank of the Firth of Clyde estuary, to Arrochar & Tarbet station on the isthmus between the seawater Loch Long and freshwater Loch Lomond. These ex-NBR tank engines were fitted with push-pull regulator controlled vacuum-operated apparatus and hauled or propelled a train of two non-corridor Gresley coaches. Another member of the class, No 67475, was similarly push-pull fitted before its withdrawal from the service in April 1954. Some key dates for these three locomotives are within Table One, including their official date of transfer to Eastfield shed and their subsequent visit to the nearby Cowlairs Works for the fitting of push-pull equipment, with the first of the trio so equipped during a light overhaul of October 1940, while running as LNER No 9135. The second locomotive did not follow suit for a decade, and if no push-pull fitted 'C15' was available, due to repairs or works visits, the temporarily stand in was likely a Gresley 'V1' class 2-6-2T, but in July 1950 it was notably reported (*Trains Illustrated*, October 1950) that Gresley 'V4' class 2-6-2 No 61701 was used on the service.

As an example of the service pattern, in the summer of 1949 the first push-pull train of the day departed Arrochar & Tarbet at 7.18am, reaching Craigendoran at 8.08am and returning from there at 9am, with subsequent

weekday departures at 10.04am ex-Arrochar, 11.24am from Craigendoran, 1pm ex-Arrochar (Saturdays only), 2pm from Craigendoran (SO), 2.45pm ex-Arrochar (Saturdays excepted), 4.50pm ex-Arrochar (SO), 6.09pm from Craigendoran (SX) or at 7pm on a Saturday, so the last push-pull service concluded its business at Arrochar & Tarbet at 7.05pm on Mondays to Fridays, and at 7.54pm on Saturdays. In this period the schedule was between 51 and 56 minutes; there was no Sunday service.

In a nutshell, there were at least three return trains on weekdays, Saturday having four return trips. With a few minor timing tweaks, this pattern of operation remained, the gap in the push-pull schedule, most notably on Mondays to Fridays, being filled on every weekday by the 1.05pm ex-Edinburgh (Waverley)/3.46pm Glasgow (Queen Street), which called at Craigendoran at 4.23pm (1955/56 times) and then stopped at all West Highland stations as it made its way to Mallaig, 164¾ miles from Glasgow.

Table One

The push-pull 'C15' 4-4-2Ts of Eastfield shed

Final No	New	Subsequent numbers and other key dates
67460	Yorkshire Engine Co Ltd Works No 1073 August 1912 as NBR No 135	LNER No 9135 from October 1924 Arrive Eastfield ex-Polmont, May 23, 1940 Push-pull fitted at Cowlairs Works in October 1940 Spark arrestor fitted at Cowlairs Works, October 7, 1941 LNER No 7460 from January 1946 BR No 67460 from June 1948 Withdrawn: April 1960
67474	Yorkshire Engine Co Ltd Works No 1088 August 1913 as NBR No 309	LNER No 9309 from February 1925 LNER No 7474 from March 1946 BR No 67474 from September 1948 Arrive Eastfield ex-Carlisle Canal, August 20, 1954 Push-pull fitted at Cowlairs Works, August 24-September 25, 1954 Withdrawn: April 1960
67475	Yorkshire Engine Co Ltd Works No 1089 August 1913 as NBR No 16	LNER No 9016 from April 1924 Arrive Eastfield ex-Parkhead in June 1941 LNER No 7475 from May 1946 Transferred Eastfield to Kipps, May 18, 1946 BR No 67475 from October 1948 Reallocated to Eastfield, October 30, 1950 Push-pull fitted at Cowlairs Works, September 28-October 26, 1950 Withdrawn: April 1954



No 67474 simmers in the pier platform at Craigendoran on Saturday, July 2, 1957, when the loop is clear of stock but the siding to the easternmost of the two piers is occupied by five tank wagons, on hand for fuelling the Clyde steamer fleet, with another two at the end of the pier; a couple of vans are also in the headshunt to the loop. Three vessels are on hand, the furthest two each having a pair of funnels. By the mid-1950s the steamer service was largely six-days a week, to Dunoon, while high summer saw Sunday operations too, with most sailings linking Craigendoran with Dunoon and Rothesay, and often thence a cruise. David Anderson

In the other direction, the 1pm ex-Mallaig stopped at Arrochar & Tarbet at 6.01pm and called at all West Highland stations except Rhu as it made its way to Glasgow and Edinburgh and continued as an overnight duty to London (King's Cross).

Travelling north over the southern section of the West Highland line from Craigendoran station, the push-pull trains served five intermediate stations or halts: Helensburgh (Upper) – 2 miles 8 chains from Craigendoran; Rhu (until January 1956) – 3 miles 70 chains; Shandon – 6 miles 48 chains; Garelochhead – 8 miles 76 chains; Whistlefield – 10 miles 30 chains; and then terminated at Arrochar & Tarbet – 19 miles 47 chains.

The first railway to reach Helensburgh was the Glasgow, Dumbarton & Helensburgh Railway, which opened on May 28, 1858 and was operationally aligned to the Edinburgh & Glasgow Railway, (E&GR) but inconveniently the western terminus was away from the town's pier. Absorbed by the E&GR on August 14, 1862, and in turn taken over by the North British Railway from July 31, 1865, even as late as the 1880s the NBR was anxious to connect the Helensburgh line with the town's pier – at a time when its Caledonian Railway rival was developing railway and coastal traffic on the south side of the river Clyde estuary. However, Helensburgh residents were determined to protect their foreshore from the disfigurement of a potential railway and the NBR therefore abandoned the scheme in favour of constructing a terminal railway pier

with associated facilities at Craigendoran, 1¼ miles east of Helensburgh pier and at the entrance to the Gare Loch, an inlet of the Clyde. Running from Craigendoran Junction, the pier deviation route was built to handle the developing traffic of both the railway company and its associated river steamer sailings as the North British Steam Packet Company; established in 1866.

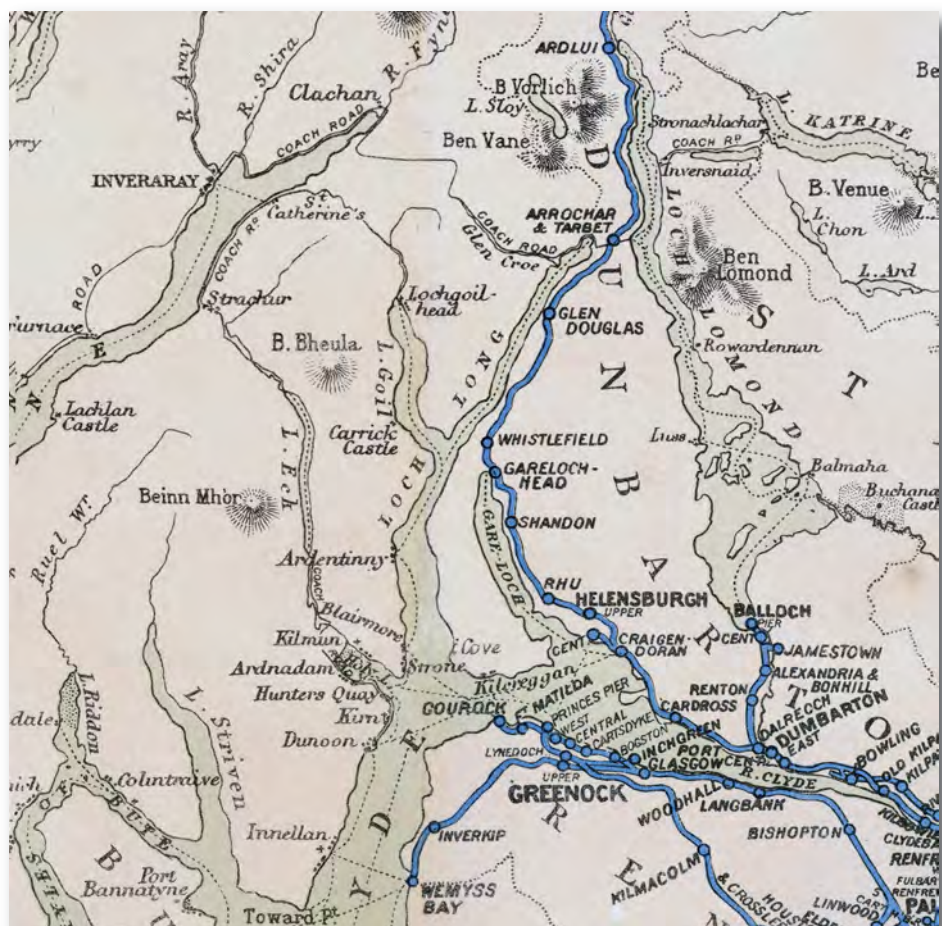
The station and pier facilities at Craigendoran opened on May 15, 1882 and it became a busy and lucrative ferry port to satisfy the growing popularity of the Firth of Clyde holiday and excursion traffic. Two piers were built, that on the Helensburgh side being slightly longer, and the railway link to and from it was provided with a lengthy single platform with extensive canopy cover. On a curve, the

platform road had a neighbouring run-round loop, and across from this were sidings and a goods link onto the shorter of the two piers.

In due course these facilities also gave access to the scenic attractions of the area by the West Highland line, which opened to the public from Craigendoran through to Fort William on August 7, 1894. This was achieved by means of a rail connection to the original Helensburgh line at Craigendoran Junction, 17 chains east of Craigendoran station.

Traditionally, services provided between Craigendoran and Arrochar & Tarbet knitted with those running between Helensburgh (Central) and Glasgow (Queen Street) Low Level, and from the early days of the NBR, throughout the LNER period and into BR days these conveyed quite a first class clientele

An extract from a British Railways era map shows both the railways due west and north of Dumbarton and the routes of any regular loch steamer services, as well as the lochs, some significant peaks and a few key roads. An idea of scale can be gleaned from the fact that Dumbarton (Central) is just over eight miles from Helensburgh (Central). West Highland line mileage starts at Craigendoran Junction, with Garelochhead, Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui (27 miles 43 chains) all boasting piers and thus offering the opportunity of an outing using both the railway and a Clyde-based or loch steamer. The map is undated but the existence of Glen Douglas indicates between May 1960 and June 1964, its brief lifespan as a BR-operated public station. Oakwood Visuals Collection





At the western pier at Craigendoran in July 1959 is ex-LNER paddle steamer *Jeanie Deans*, a Caledonian Steam Packet Co asset since 1951. Completed by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd at Govan and launched on April 7, 1931, draft restrictions at Craigendoran necessitated paddle steamers, albeit a three-crank engine was new for a Clyde steamer, an impressive 18½ knots being achieved in trials. Given the name of a character from Sir Walter Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* (previously carried by a North British Steam Packet Co Ltd vessel from 1884 until scrapped in 1920), *Jeanie Deans* was initially used on the flagship *Arrochar* and *Lochgoilhead* service and became a favourite on cruises from Craigendoran, albeit at a more sedate pace after its years as a minesweeper and post-war refit, when the weight (originally 635 tons gross) was raised to 814 tons. The winter of 1956/57 saw this paddler converted from coal to oil burning, and radar would be a 1960 addition. Retired after the 1964 season, *Jeanie Deans* was sold in 1965 and then sailed to London for a new life as *Queen of the South* for the Coastal Steam Packet Co Ltd, but wheel and boiler problems scuppered that option and it was then bound for Antwerp in December 1967 as scrap. In the distance is Rosneath Point at the end of the Gare Loch, the river Clyde to the left and beyond, with Greenock just visible when looking along the pier. Keith Pirt, courtesy Book Law Publications

of business people who lived in Helensburgh and its upper reaches and towards Loch Lomond, so in 1933 when the LNER was considering making a number of services push-pull operated to reduce operating costs, in part in the hope of dispensing with guards, an adequate first class provision was necessary for at least the morning and evening peaks. Nothing was done in the short term, but despite the onset of war in 1939, the following year saw plans come to pass, at least for this one Scottish service.

Reference to the 1953 allocation of passenger stock to the Scottish Region identifies four Gresley non-corridor coaches as being for 'push-pull' working – brake composite (BC) vehicles Nos 80326 and 80327 and composite lavatory (CL) carriages Nos 88024 and 88053. The latter vehicle was built in 1929, the other three dating from 1930, and doubtless all had worked ordinary services until their change of use in 1940, the conversion of the four coaches, most notably the two 'BCs' each receiving a driving cab, concurrent with the modification to 'C15' 4-4-2T LNER No 9135; presumably the one set was a spare, with the sets worked turn and turn about. The need for first class accommodation was reflected in the

combined seating provision of a 'BC' and 'CL' coach – 35 first class and 73 third/second when forming a two-coach train. In this connection, there were two sets provided, nominally based at Craigendoran, and no record has been traced that records their use together on any given service, but in 19 years of use such an event cannot be ruled out. What made them also rather unique was being the only four survivors of their kind in the 1953 listing, any extant sister vehicles by then no longer in Scotland.

Off the ensemble went – the loco trailed from Craigendoran with the 'BC' leading, and in the reverse order returned from Arrochar, although whether this was a statutory instruction is unknown – and the one locomotive appears to have coped for the next decade or so single-handedly, as it was not until October 1950 that the first 'C15', by now running as British Railways No 67460, was joined by reinforcements. Photographs of No 67475 have eluded us, its reign only lasting until September 1954 when replaced by No 67474, and both it and No 67460 thereafter shared duties, largely unchallenged until November 1959 when a railbus took over the operation. It is travel in this period that inspires the following journey.

Craigendoran to Arrochar & Tarbet

The station at Craigendoran consisted of a high-level island platform for the West Highland line trains and a low-level station of two through platforms serving the original Helensburgh (Central) line and the terminal bay that curved towards the pier and its berth for four steamers. It was the latter that was used by the push-pull trains arriving from and departing for Arrochar & Tarbet.

The signalling for both stations was controlled from Craigendoran Junction box after the closure of Craigendoran West box on May 2, 1937. Historically there were three box locations at Craigendoran – West, Junction, and East – with West being a tall structure at the Helensburgh end of the up Helensburgh line platform but accessed via an elevated walkway from beside the West Highland line trackbed. A tall, six-sided pagoda-style structure, it was of unique design and its domain included the northern end of Upper station, its work being taken over by Craigendoran Junction box. East box was to the Glasgow side of the station and oversaw sidings on the up side; they were west-facing, included a turntable and were used as part of the Faslane military port operation established in World War Two. East box closed from

Although far less photogenic than the elegant and evocative 'C15' at the other end of the train, photographs of the driving end of one of the two brake composite vehicles (No 67460 in this case) used on the Arrochar push-pull sets have proved difficult to find, this being a rare exception. Judging by the size of the end windows, the seats for the driver and guard must have been fairly close to the glass, while the fireman was on his own on the locomotive when pushing. This view from the Lower station at Craigendoran is of the 7pm service to Arrochar & Tarbet, after departure from the pier station and reversal at Craigendoran Junction, entering Upper station on May 29, 1954. W A C Smith/Transport Treasury



March 28, 1960 when the 'Blue Train' overhead electrification was pressing through to Helensburgh (Central), leaving the centrally-positioned 'Junction' box to at first oversee the double-track electrified Helensburgh to Dumbarton route, the still active pier line, and the up and down lines skirting Upper station; the remaining box was thereafter known simply as 'Craigendoran'.

Passenger access was (and remains for the one remaining platform) via an underpass beneath Upper station, linking to its island platform (until 1964) and continuing through to the up platform of Lower station and the main station buildings. From there, an impressive enclosed footbridge (now replaced by a simpler design) gave access to the Helensburgh-bound platform and the bay/pier line beyond it. West Highland trains no longer stop at Craigendoran, the Upper station being closed on June 14, 1964, along with most of the intermediate stations between Craigendoran and Arrochar & Tarbet and withdrawal of the local service that was by then dieselized but was formerly 'C15'-worked, the nearest West Highland line station to remain open being Helensburgh (Upper).

The covered bay line leading to the pier was in use until September 25, 1972, while 1984 saw the former down Helensburgh platform taken out of use as a new Craigendoran signal box was commissioned as part of singling from Helensburgh (Central) to Craigendoran Junction. Even that box was superseded in 1992 as part of the growth of Yoker signalling centre, which thereafter signalled the West Highland line to a position just south of Helensburgh (Upper), the line beyond there having lost its semaphore signals in favour of Radio Electronic Token Block (RETB) controlled from Banavie, a scheme commissioned in December 1987. With all these changes in mind, Craigendoran station is now a shadow of its former self, with only the up platform of the Lower station remaining, and even that

has a modern replacement building rather than its predecessor.

Over the years, before and after the British Railways push-pull period under review, a few notes enrich the history of this often overlooked section of the West Highland line, with, unless otherwise stated, all stations opened on August 7, 1894 and ultimately closed from June 14, 1964. Most had the classic chalet-style buildings and island platforms that were standard on the West Highland main line, but there are exceptions.

After its southbound departure from Craigendoran (Lower) station's pier platform, a down push-pull service travelled the $\frac{1}{4}$ mile distance to a point just beyond Craigendoran Junction, where it undertook reversal and then restarted north, propelling its two-coach formation through the West Highland line Upper station and then on the single-line 1 in 58 gradient, partly on a mile-long embankment and then through a deep cutting towards its first stop at Helensburgh (Upper). The route from Craigendoran (Upper) immediately forms a reverse 'S' formation before facing the erstwhile site of the Lucas & Aird depot and yard used for construction of the railway. Immediately at this point the line swings north again, soon enters the cutting section and curves west for the run in to Helensburgh (Upper) station, passing the goods yard on the right and then beneath Luss Road, the B832 in steam days but now the A818; it offers a direct link from Helensburgh to the edge of Loch Lomond. When built, the West Highland line circumnavigated the east and northern edges of Helensburgh and it was not really until the post-war years that the community expanded to any great extent beyond the boundary of the railway.

The standard island platform here is unique on the line in having a covered ramp walkway from the Sinclair Street/Luss Road over-bridge down to the platform. Wartime needs saw the loop extended at its north end, with a replacement signal box installed in



Looking east from Craigendoran's Upper platforms on July 5, 1957 with Craigendoran Junction signal box, an NBR timber-on-brick, gabled-roof structure. In the 'Vee' of the Helensburgh (Central) and West Highland lines, the latter is in the foreground, complete with an east end crossover as part of the double-track link that becomes single-track with passing places beyond here and throughout the West Highland line. This layout dates from the 1890s so was used for running round before push-pull operations. A pair of elevated ground signals guard the crossover. Note the rail-mounted NBR cast-iron warning notice discouraging trespass off the end of the platform; the exit from the station was by stairs at its west end, leading to a subway. To the east, the merged routes hug the coastline beyond Ardmore and out of sight, the line continues onward towards Dumbarton and Glasgow. H C Casserley/Kidderminster Railway Museum

Virtually at the meeting point of the original Helensburgh route of 1858 and the West Highland line of 1894, 1931-built Gresley 'VI' class 2-6-2T No 67614 accelerates away from Craigendoran (Lower) station and passes behind Craigendoran Junction signal box with the 6.06pm service from Helensburgh (Central), whilst Reid 'C15' 4-4-2T No 67460 descends from Upper station with the 5.17pm push-pull service from Arrochar & Tarbet on June 1, 1957. Of particular note is that the formation is three coaches, surprising as the peak season timetable was still two weeks away. Once able to proceed beyond the box, the push-pull train will reverse, propelling along the nearest track and terminating in Lower station's pier platform. In the distance beyond and to the left of the signal box, the gantry signal carries two home semaphores, that for the main route, to Helensburgh, is the tallest, and its shorter neighbour is for the pier platform; no less than five shunt signals share the same bracket. W A C Smith/Transport Treasury



Out and about from its Arrochar outstation, on the morning of July 2, 1957 we find 'C15' No 67474 departing from the pier platform of Craigendoran (Lower) with a push-pull duty to Arrochar & Tarbet, the up and down Helensburgh lines being in the foreground. Beyond Craigendoran Junction and reversal, the climb to the nearby Upper station (immediately behind the photographer) is a brief 1 in 60, easing off to 1 in 260 at the platform, but beyond there it is a hard grind at 1 in 58 for the best part of 1½ miles, through to Helensburgh (Upper) station. David Anderson

1941, but subsequent cutting back saw the goods service withdrawn from here on May 4, 1964, six weeks before the local passenger service was lost, and the up platform line was removed in 1968, enabling the signal box to close. Regrettably, despite the retention of the station, the chalet-style building has since been lost and the course of the old up line is now filled in, creating a very wide platform served only by the former down line; a modern waiting shelter is now provided.



A view from the down through platform at Craigendoran (Lower) records the Upper station and a pausing Arrochar-bound push-pull train propelled by Atlantic tank No 67474, the third of the trio of Eastfield 'C15s' to be converted to push-pull, in August/September 1954, but in the event longer-serving on this duty than the locomotive it replaced, No 67475. This class, the NBR 'I' series, was grouped with 4-4-0s and 0-4-4Ts in the 'M' power rating during NBR days, and ultimately the first of what became the LNER/BR 'C15s', sometimes called 'Yorkies' after their builder, was withdrawn in December 1952 after over 39½ years of service, so the demise of 28 of the 30 engines by the end of April 1956 was after a natural lifespan. However, Nos 67460 and 67474 soldiered on gallantly, nominally for the best part of another four years, the Arrochar job bringing with it life extension. In addition to appreciating the locomotive from a low angle, we glimpse both the West Highland line and Helensburgh route main station buildings. G Siviour/Kidderminster Railway Museum



Aptly-named in the higher reaches of Helensburgh, the alignment through Upper station is virtually east-west, this view from the south side of the line, with the northbound platform nearest the camera, was recorded in July 1959. The wartime-built signal box is prominent at this end of the building, while the more typical chalet-style passenger station is beyond, as is the ascending covered walkway from the island platform towards Sinclair Street and Luss Road. Of the structures seen in this view, only the walkway remains today, with the loop gone and the far side of the platform filled in, so up and down trains now call on what was the down road.

Norris Forrest/Transport Treasury

STEAM DAYS



Viewed from almost the same position as the previous photograph, 'C15' No 67460 propels its down two-coach push-pull service away from Helensburgh (Upper) on March 8, 1958. The distant peak is Maol Riabhach (632ft) on the Rosneath peninsula, on the far side of the Gare Loch. As is ideal for a station, Helensburgh (Upper) is on a level section of route, but the combination of hard climbing, steep descents and tight curves lay ahead over the next 4½ miles as by this time the next stop is Shandon, the intermediate stop of Rhu having been closed and thus bypassed. W S Sellar

After the level section of line at the station, the gradient is 1 in 67 before easing slightly to 1 in 88 at around the mid-way point to Rhu – the distance is just 1 mile 62 chains between these stops but five minutes was usual on the push-pull schedule. Within minutes of leaving Helensburgh, the wide panorama of the Firth of Clyde opens out below the railway, with views of Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow across the estuary. However, after a series of curves and undulating track – a 1 in 100 descent leads to Rhu station – it is soon the inlet of the Gare Loch that is seen on the left, with the community of Rosneath directly across the water from Rhu. The traditional spelling for this village is Row, but in the 1920s it was decided to adopt 'Rhu', which better reflects its pronunciation – the LNER officially adopted the 'Rhu' spelling from February 24, 1927.

Originally the station boasted a two-platform layout linked by a footbridge, and the goods yard was via a trailing connection on the down side of the line at the west end of the site, its three roads offering substantially more capacity than the single road on the up

side at Helensburgh (Upper). Both these yards offered a crane with a lifting capacity of 1 ton 10cwt in LNER days but by 1956 that at Rhu was no longer being advertised, and yet the yard was still open – for bulky loads, a 5 ton capacity crane was available at Helensburgh (Central). The main station building at Rhu was on the northbound (west) side of the station, which opened with a loop but lost this and its box in 1921, while wartime needs saw a longer loop installed in 1941, but its box closed in 1950, so the loop was out of use from that time and the up line removed. The station was then closed before the end of the push-pull era, from January 9, 1956, only to reopen as a single-track unstaffed halt from April 4, 1960, but only until withdrawal of the Arrochar-Craigendoran diesel shuttle service from June 15, 1964. Although the concrete platforms survive, the route of the line through here today is slewed from its original alignment, so it is neither alongside the down or the up platform.

There was no level section at Rhu, the downhill run for down trains steepening to 1 in 68 at this point and continuing to the

crossing of Aldownick Glen, about ¼ mile beyond the station, before a climb of 1 in 113 began. Crossing the glen required a deep embankment and a pair of tunnels for its burn. The five-mile section of route from Rhu to Garelochhead is a series of undulations that include two level sections of line and a series of short and sharp climbs/descents of between 1 in 60 and 1 in 92.

Beyond Rhu station, the next railway installation is Faslane Junction, 5 miles 22 chains from Craigendoran Junction, the line that descends from it – 'Military Port No 1 Railway' – being met as a facing junction for northbound West Highland trains. The private station of Faslane Platform was to the Rhu side of the junction and it existed until 1950 for the military port, its passengers including prisoners of war being taken by train to Inveruglas, a workmen's halt a little north of Arrochar & Tarbet that was built for the Loch Sloy hydro-scheme – the construction of Loch Sloy dam and Inveruglas power station. At this point the community of Shandon is below the line, Faslane Junction being opened to the south of Shandon station from April 27, 1941, the West Highland route remaining at height while the near parallel military line makes its way to the eastern shore of the Gare Loch with most of its waterside sidings reached via reversal. The naval installation of Faslane was built during World War Two in the event of Glasgow's docks being disabled by enemy action. In addition, the 1956 *Handbook of Stations* includes 'Metal Industries Ltd, Faslane Port Sidings' within the Shandon entry, listing this as "Branch – Shandon and Rhu".

Rhu station on January 3, 1956, looking towards Helensburgh just six days before its official closure, the following Monday being the first day when trains would ordinarily have run. A footbridge once crossed the line to this side of the main station building, the original signal box being located near the foot of this at the rear of the up (disused) platform, but that was closed in 1921 and its replacement came 20 years later but only lasted nine years, so Rhu only had an operational loop for about half of its 70 years through to its second closure, in 1964. Soon the only activity would be within the goods yard, out of view to the right. As recently as the 2018/19 Scottish Nationalist Party government budget there was a review to assess the viability of reopening this station in a 'pop-up' trial, with neighbouring Shandon and 18 other sites across Scotland likewise under consideration. The check-rail on the reverse curve indicates its severity – unsurprisingly, the line is now eased through this site. W A C Smith/Transport Treasury



With its Westinghouse pump looking battered from multiple 'adjustments' by crews over the years, 'C15' No 67474 has called at Shandon station with the 6.12pm Craigendoran to Arrochar service on May 8, 1959. Despite its proximity to Faslane, Shandon station would close in May 1964 with the withdrawal of the local service, but its signal box defiantly continued in use into 1967. Its loss, with a loop, and the post-1950 cut-backs at Rhu and Helensburgh collectively resulted in Garelochhead becoming the first loop on the West Highland line, just under eight miles from Craigendoran. Nothing remains of Shandon station today, the remaining single-track passing through the site of the erstwhile island platform. W A C Smith/Transport Treasury



Travel between Rhu and Shandon was booked for six minutes, the distance being 2 miles 55 chains. The full range of goods facilities listed by the Railway Clearing House perhaps disguise the fact that Shandon station had just one siding, trailing from the up line, its crane being of 1 ton 10cwt capacity. Passenger access was via Station Road, which climbed up from the main road on the loch side, a subway leading from this to the island platform. Subsequent to its 1964 closure, the signal box was taken out of use in 1967 and the platform has been removed, enabling the running line of today to take a straight course through the site.

The next stop for a push-pull duty was just 2 miles 24 chains distant, but a glance at the public timetable reveals that a seemingly relaxed six minutes was given between the departure time of Shandon and that at Garelochhead, albeit the latter boasted a water column so time was needed for a top-up. Sited at the north end of the station, for push-pull workings the column was inconveniently some way beyond the end of the platform, its

position best-suited for the locomotives of down main line stopping trains – the propelling push-pull engine, and thus the whole train, had to be out of the station to reach and use the column, which meant departure from the station and then another restart after watering.

Often known as the gateway to the Western Highlands, not only could you gain a commanding view of the loch and the community of Garelochhead from the island platform but it was also the northernmost point of the local service from Craigendoran in pre push-pull days – the watering facility and even a small turntable in the down-side yard reflected this. Doubtless, especially in earlier times, the direct but steep path from Garelochhead pier was well trodden by day-trippers taking in a circular tour that included a steamer on the Gare Loch and use of the railway. With holidays in mind, the LNER chose Garelochhead station for its camping coach programme between 1935 and 1939, and British Railways followed suit in the mid- to late-1960s.

At the north end of Garelochhead station, goods sidings existed on both sides of the line. Public goods services were withdrawn here from November 1, 1966, with only a coal depot in use after May 4, 1964, while some private siding use continued beyond that date. The up siding was removed circa 1983, and the remaining down siding now generally sees permanent way use. Although the station saw changes in the 1980s, significantly the closure of its signal box in 1986, the closed signal cabin remains in situ and the main station building remains intact, albeit long since unmanned, with the platform actually lengthened when 'Sprinters' were introduced – the Radio Electronic Token Block era also saw right-hand running introduced at this location. In more recent times the former parcels building and short platform on the west side of the station, across the down line from the passenger platform, have been removed, but the station is still open, trains still pass here (signalled using RETB communication with Banavie), and West Highland line charm prevails.

Having recently departed Garelochhead, 'C15' No 67460 descends towards Shandon in May 1958. As can be seen, like No 67474, this locomotive sports the lined-out British Railways mixed traffic livery, but in this case the BR adornment on the side tanks is the heraldic crest of 1956 rather than the earlier emblem. Duly lined out around the locomotive's running number on the cab-side, the power rating about the number 67460 was displayed as '2PT'. The driver has the locomotive coasting, but the 1 in 80 downhill that is being enjoyed will soon be a 1 in 92 uphill, the railway being about 150ft above Faslane Bay at this point. David Anderson





After making the down call at Garelochhead station and then restarting away as far as the nearby water crane, 'C15' No 67474 is seen while watering on March 21, 1959. A hand is at rest on the water supply, so the tank is not yet full, but a gentle fountain of water spurts from the pipe near to the top of the locomotive's tank, and a trickle of water works its way down the engine, a passenger looking back from the leading coach, watching proceedings, adding to the pastoral charm of the scene, the down semaphore already 'off' for the train to continue onwards to Whistlefield. The coaching stock is as booked, with the 'BC' leading and the 'CL' next to the locomotive, the latter being No SC88024E, the suffix denoting its origin; note that only the first two doors are marked as first class on the set. The wooden-bodied open wagon on the right is in the up yard, now long gone, while the platform extension of the 1980s now takes it some way past the former watering point. W S Sellar

This view records the picturesque setting of the remote Whistlefield station (1896-1964), the backdrop as we look west being the meeting point of Loch Gail and Loch Long, the latter stretching from the Firth of Clyde to Arrochar. Lens of Sutton Collection

Continuing our journey with the 2,080 gallon tanks of the 'C15' locomotive topped up with water, the scenic route of the line towards Whistlefield is steeply graded – 1 in 61 rising to 1 in 58 – and en route passes over the three-span Garelochhead viaduct, its bridged waters flowing to the Gare Loch. The stone for the piers was extracted from the cutting at Rhu ('Row' at that time). The line has now gained an altitude of 300ft above the east shore of Loch Long, which is first seen to the left on the approach to Whistlefield and is thereafter followed by the railway for most of the route to Arrochar.

Opened on October 21, 1896, Whistlefield station was a single-platform stopping place on a very brief 1 in 115 grade. The platform was on the down side, a path leading down to the road, from where Portincaple on the loch's edge could be reached, while the station name came from Whistlefield store, on the main road just a

The summit board at Glen Douglas, as seen on January 28, 1961 complete with its confirmatory gradient post, the steeper descent being that to the north.
W A C Smith/Transport Treasury



few yards south of the station, which in modern times became the Green Kettle Inn. Within moments of restarting, the propelling Reid 'C15' and its crew were engaged in assaulting a 1 in 54 gradient, and similar grades prevailed for the next 4½ miles, albeit with some very brief easings. On the climb is Finnart viaduct – a three-span girder structure over the Allt Darach – and respite is finally at hand once Glen Douglas summit is reached, 14 miles 65 chains from Craigendoran, the mileage ahead now all severely downhill except for a short section of upgrade immediately ahead of Arrochar & Tarbet station. It is a measure of the gradients that a 'C15' was given 23 minutes to cover the 9 mile 15 chains from Whistlefield to Arrochar & Tarbet.

At the Glen Douglas summit, 564ft above sea level, views are obtained across the loch far below, and north towards the 2,891ft Ben Arthur (also known as 'The Cobbler'). Just beyond the summit, Glen Douglas siding existed from 1895 through to 1926 but it was then made 'private' – as Glen Douglas Platform and then simply as 'Glen Douglas' from 1942 –

until becoming Glen Douglas Halt, a public stopping place, from June 12, 1961, so in the railcar era. The lofty signal box was to the south of the island platform and neither exist today, the station closing in 1964 and the signal box in 1986. On the positive side, the main line loop is retained, and a munitions depot was established on the east side of the main line in 1966. The extant link is trailing for southbound (up) trains, and beyond the reception sidings and run-round loop, a reversal is needed to gain access to the main site.

Beyond Glen Douglas, the railway continues northwards on a high ledge above Loch Long, albeit descending rapidly for the best part of four miles, mainly at 1 in 57 and 1 in 53, and passing over Manse viaduct, where the Ant-Sreang flows beneath the three-span girder structure and down to the southern end of Arrochar and into Loch Long. Just 1¼ miles later, after a short and sharp 1 in 69 grade on the final approach to Arrochar & Tarbet station, we reach the terminus of our push-pull journey, to the east of which lies the village of Tarbet. Within Britain and Ireland, the name 'Tarbet' is



With about 250ft of climbing from Arrochar achieved in three miles, on a steady but grueling 1 in 57, veteran ex-North British Railway 4-4-2T No 67474 and its two-coach push-pull train are now around 500ft above sea level, high above Craggan on Loch Long, and virtually at the Glen Douglas passing loop. Across the loch are the lower slopes of The Cobbler (2,891ft) and Beinn Narnain (3,036ft), a Corbett and a Munro respectively, just two of the peaks around Loch Long, Loch Goilhead and Loch Fyne that have inspired the name 'the Arrochar Alps'. Millbrook House/Kidderminster Railway Museum

Journey's end, on arrival from Craigendoran, 'C15' class 4-4-2T No 67474 is seen on the down side at Arrochar & Tarbet station on the morning of Saturday, March 21, 1959. The fireman has been quick to swap the headlamp code on the locomotive ready for the return journey, from a single tail lamp to the perceived 'express' code, Class 'A', which was in fact carried by every passenger train on the West Highland line. Once again, the classic West Highland line chalet-style station architecture is seen. The signal box is behind the photographer, on the island platform at the south end of the station. W V Sellar



inspired from the geological feature of an isthmus – a narrow strip of land that connects two larger landmasses and separates two bodies of water – the low-lying land between the villages of Arrochar and Tarbet, of about 1½ miles length, offering an easy path for both the railway and the main roads, Arrochar being the meeting point of the A814 from the south and the A83 west from Tarbet to Inveraray (23 miles), West Tarbet (68 miles) and Campbeltown (98 miles).



In the same few minutes, Stuart Sellar recorded the crew of No 67474, before the shunt north for reversal into Arrochar's up side platform. The driver is Dougie MacLean and his fireman is Gus Campbell, both local men – the push-pull duty was an Arrochar turn and there were two sets of men. They seem content in their domain and appear to be on top of dietary needs, with a bag from a loaf of bread open on the far side of the cab, doubtless containing their 'piece' (sandwiches), and there is plenty of milk, the latter just brought onto the footplate by Gus, in case you were wondering about the far from fridge-like properties of a 'C15' cab! The larger bottles are most likely for brewing tea, which would be kept warm on the shelf above the firehole door. As an aside, the hard and twisting journey up from Craigendoran has resulted in some coal bouncing from the locomotive's bunker on to the cab roof. W V Sellar



Arrochar & Tarbet station is just a short walk from Tarbet pier on Loch Lomond, where in 1963 we see *Maid of the Loch* arriving; across the loch, the dominant peak is Ben Lomond (3,192ft). The last built British Railways paddle steamer, *Maid of the Loch* is a Clydeside product of A & J Inglis but it arrived at Balloch as a kit of parts, being launched from the slipway there on March 5, 1953. Balloch, at the south end of the 26½ mile loch, has proven to be its forever home, the love for this vessel extending to its preservation post-decommissioning in 1981. Holding the record as Britain's largest paddle steamer on inland waters, which soon proved to be over-capacity as foreign holidays became fashionable, *Maid of the Loch* is seen operating a summer-only service, with piers at Balmaha, Rowardennan, Inversnaid and Ardlui served in addition to those at Balloch and Tarbet. The preservation of this paddle steamer has seen some recent milestones achieved, including the restarting of the engine in late 2019, so this tranquil scene will in time be recreated. S Rickard/J & J Collection

An interior view of Arrochar & Tarbet signal box in 1963 includes the box diagram above the levers, the simple track plan being a loop around the island platform, with the goods and engine servicing needs fed off a long facing siding from the up loop, with a two-road goods yard trailing from this and the locomotive servicing point created at the far end of the line, on the headshunt and with a neighbouring short siding. In operational terms, this box has Ardlui to its north and Glen Douglas to its south. S Rickard/J & J Collection

Interestingly, the station subsequently named Arrochar & Tarbet was listed in the West Highland Railway Act of 1889 as Ballyhennon after the neighbouring hamlet, whereas the replacement name of 'Arrochar & Tarbet' respectively referred to the village at the head of Loch Long (to its west) and the village to its east, on Loch Lomond, and both gained steamer piers, the continuity of name aiding the planning of tourist trips of the lochs and the railway.

Not long after the opening of the West Highland Railway, in 1898 the comparative proximity of Arrochar to Inveraray, the county town of Argyll, saw a scheme put before the Light Railway Commission to build a branch line from Arrochar through Glen Croe to St Catherine's, on Loch Fyne, from where a regular ferry service operated across the loch to Inveraray; in various forms the ferries existed from the 16th century through to 1963. A branch line would not only serve the county town but also help to develop the Loch Fyne fisheries. A most difficult route, the light railway project was unsurprisingly abandoned due to the costly engineering work involved.

Arrochar & Tarbet station was of the classic West Highland island platform arrangement, with chalet-style station buildings and public access via a subway. The 1894 built signal box remains to this day at the south end of the platform, surviving beyond being superseded by the RETB system of the 1980s, the remaining sidings thereafter operated by a groundframe. In addition, the platforms were lengthened to cope with the new trains – Oban- and Fort William-bound

'Sprinter' trains run as a combined train south of Crianlarich, where they part or merge at the meeting point of the two routes. Sadly, the unstaffed station buildings at Arrochar found no long-term use and were removed circa late 1990s – attempts had been made to let them for non-railway use – albeit the new shelter that replaced them was inspired by the design of the retained signal box.

Together with its coaches, the 'C15' 4-4-2T that worked the push-pull shuttle service between Craignendran and Arrochar & Tarbet was stabled overnight in a pair of north-facing sidings that paralleled the running line at the south end of Arrochar & Tarbet station, in readiness for the following day's return journey to the Clyde at Craignendran. The stabling facilities were minimal, to say the least. The siding nearest the main line was the headshunt for the goods yard and was itself occupied by a 16 ton mineral wagon of loco-coal, while the other was the stabling point for the locomotive, alongside the coal wagon, with a wooden-bodied open wagon on the same line as the 'C15' but nearer the buffer stops – this was used for ash disposal. It appears (at least in later days) that the coaches were left on the headshunt road when the locomotive went for servicing, so between the two-road goods yard and the two-road servicing point. A concrete panel hut acted as the crew's bothy. Despite having no shed building and few facilities, servicing at this point dates back to the earliest days of the line, with Arrochar & Tarbet subordinate to Eastfield shed through its entire steam days, firstly with the North British, then LNER and until the autumn of 1959.



The post-1959 story

It was all change for the Helensburgh (Central) to Glasgow (Queen Street) Low Level and the Craignendran to Arrochar & Tarbet services in November 1959, but the brand new trains on the two very different stopping services – the much-vaulted electric-multiple-unit 'Blue Trains' into Glasgow, and four-wheel railbuses on the lower reaches of the West Highland line – doubtless ruffled a few feathers through their lack of first class accommodation.

In regard to the Arrochar local duty, the official last day of push-pull operation was Saturday, October 31, 1959, appropriately with

A sub-shed with no shed, just a bothy for crews, Arrochar & Tarbet was home for one of its parent shed's 'C15s', their allocation to Eastfield (65A), being specifically for the Arrochar-Craigendoran push-pull duty. On this occasion, the morning of September 15, 1957, the Arrochar engine is No 67460 – note the 'C-15' and 'Eastfield' wording on the front buffer beam, and the two bell coupling connections for push-pull work are also labelled. The loco coal wagon is on the left, mounds of ash and clinker are on the right, and beyond are the concrete-walled bothy and the distant push-pull coaches, the latter being parked up mid-way along the long siding. M J Reade/Colour-Rail.com/3420



'C15' No 67640 in use – it being the pioneer of the service and in its 19th season on the duty. However, steady rain was falling and the afternoon saw railbus No SC79969 turn up at Arrochar & Tarbet and park up in the goods yard ready to take over the service from the Monday morning, November 2. One of the five passenger railcars built for British Railways by D Wickham & Co Ltd (Nos 79965-69), all for the Scottish Region, it boasted pneumatic suspension, seated 44 passengers, and was powered by a Meadows six-cylinder 6HDT500 engine of 105bhp, Freeborn-Wickham transmission driving a Self-Changing Gears Ltd four-speed box and cardan shaft to the final drive. Allocated to Helensburgh shed, the change of motive power also brought about a change of parent shed for Arrochar & Tarbet, from Eastfield to Helensburgh.

Despite the hopes of trouble-free modernization, the unit did not dispense with steam-operation, or even push-pull haulage, as railbus failures led to locomotive-hauled substitutions. The *Railway Observer* provides a good overview of the unfolding situation, starting in the March 1960 issue with news

that all had not been well with No SC79969, "culminating in its retirement to Helensburgh shed in mid-January, and the reappearance of the two 'C15s', Nos 67640 and 67474, working alternate days." However, by February 8 No 67474 had returned to Eastfield shed and 'J37' class 0-6-0 No 64633 was working the service, the use of a non-push-pull fitted locomotive necessitating running round the stock after each journey; interestingly, No 67460 was still in steam at Helensburgh. A week later the same 'J37' was still working the service, but with modern stock – a 'BS' and a 'BC' – and the push-pull stock was laid-off in

Craigendoran, apparently condemned, while 'J37' No 64633 was used on Saturday, February 13, 1960. As a rule, steam locomotives standing in hauled whatever coaches could be found.

With Wickham No SC79969 out of use, The *Railway Observer* used the term "disabled", March 1960 saw railbus No SC79970 trialed – it was one of the Park Royal Vehicles Ltd-built units (Nos 79970-74), with AEC engines of 150bhp and boasting 50 seats, all second class. Although seemingly unused on the service for some time, it was most likely the successful trial of the Park Royal railcar that led to the withdrawal of 'C15s' Nos 67460 and 67474, respectively on April 1 and April 12, 1960, when a four-wheel railbus took over the duty and Rhu was reopened as a halt. It had been closed to passengers between January 4, 1956 and April 4, 1960. The two 'C15s' had outlived the 28 other class members thanks to their push-pull role, and had an unexpected swansong thanks to the "protracted indisposition" of the first Wickham railcar, but once superseded by No SC79970 they were soon cut up, in May at Cowlairs Works.

Subsequent railcar sightings include Park Royal No M79971 on June 11, 1960, perhaps



Having arrived tender-first on the 10.05am Arrochar & Tarbet to Craigendoran service in lieu of unavailable Wickham railcar No SC79969, Reid 'J37' class 0-6-0 No 64633 returns north with the 11.40am from Craigendoran and is hard at work on the exposed section of line just west of Craigendoran, shortly before reaching the cutting that leads to Helensburgh (Upper) station. New to traffic from Cowlairs Works in June 1921 as NBR '517' series No 103, this locomotive was new with both Westinghouse equipment and steam heating and its allocation in LNER and BR days was solely to the nearby Eastfield shed, its service life ultimately ending on June 8, 1964. W A C Smith/Transport Treasury



For the high season summer service of 1960 the need for a greater capacity train on Saturdays saw the usual railbus-operated Arrochar-Craigendoran shuttle workings handed over to a locomotive and stock, this view being taken on the first steam-hauled weekend, albeit the second attempt. Note that, unlike with the propelling down push-pull train, the stock is at the platform while the locomotive is at the water column. Reid 'J37' class 0-6-0 No 64581 pauses at Garelochhead with an evening duty on June 18, 1960. A product of the North British Locomotive Co Ltd for the North British Railway, and to traffic in October 1918 as NBR No 461, No 64581 saw its final reallocation when running as LNER No 9461 in April 1937, thereafter serving from Eastfield shed. W S Sellar

disappointing for the enthusiast reporter as steam traction was expected for the summer Saturday turn – 'J37' class 0-6-0 No 64580 had failed. The belated summer Saturday steam operation duly began one week later with Eastfield-allocated 'J37' No 64581 and three coaches, while Gresley 'V3' class 2-6-2T No 67628 was on the duty on August 6, again with a three-coach train, while the following Saturday saw 'J37' No 64580 on two coaches.

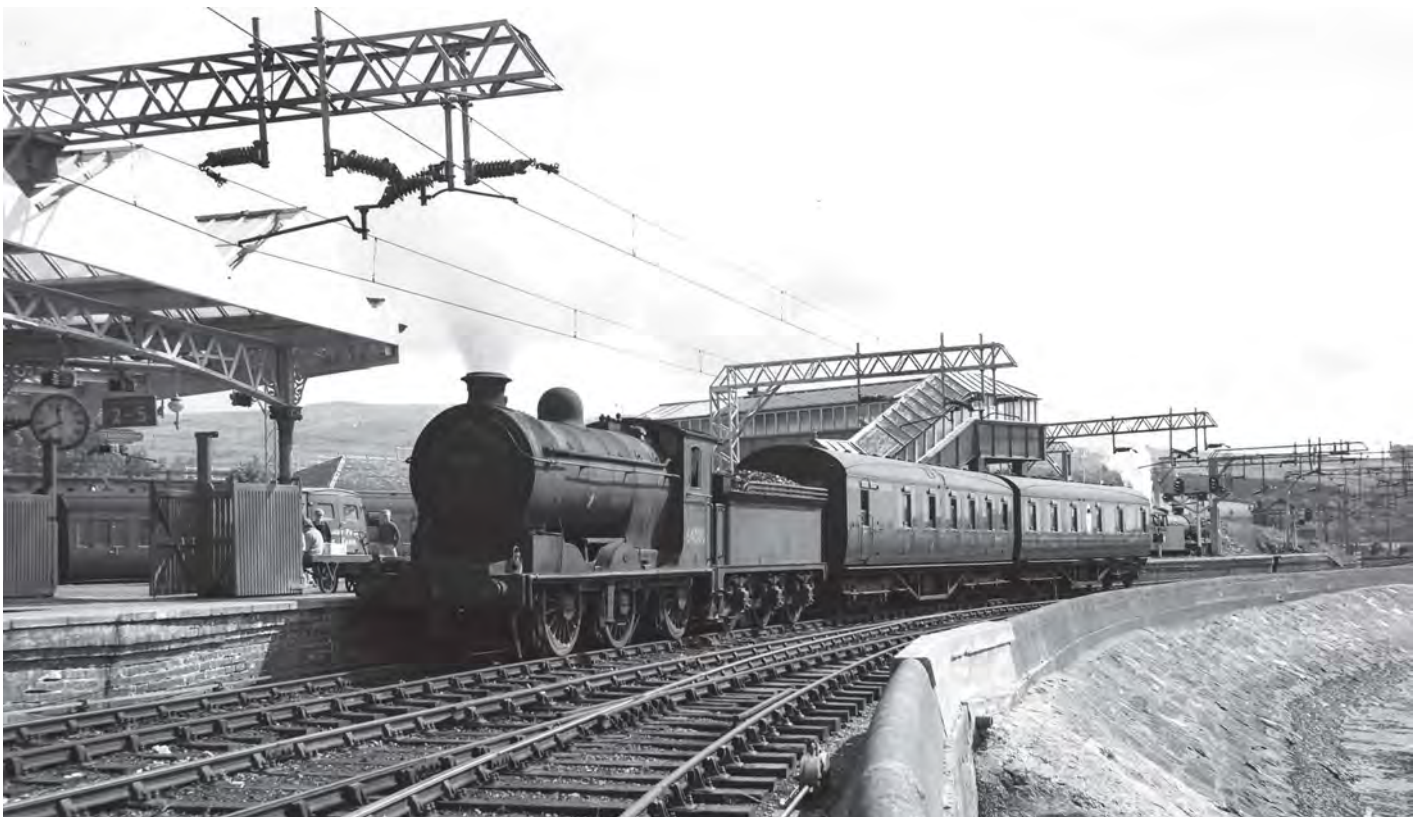
Although it had not been the experience locally, a November 1960 report stated that across the Scottish Region it was the Wickham-built railcars that were considered "the most successful and the Bristols – Nos SC79958 and 79959 – the least so."

November 11, 1960 saw Helensburgh engine shed close, 'Blue Train' electric operation from November 7, to Airdrie, having eliminated its last steam passenger

workings, and Dumbarton shed taking the goods trip work, Helensburgh thereafter just a signing-on point. However, the closure was soon reversed when the electric stock needed to be withdrawn for modifications – the shed was reopened from December 12, 1960 through to the 'Blue Train' return on September 30, 1961.

Meanwhile, railcar No M79971 was in use from Arrochar at least until late January 1961,

The summer Saturday locomotive-hauled Craigendoran-Arrochar local trains were in the hands of 'J37' 0-6-0 No 64580 on August 13, 1960, the stock on this day being a Thompson 'BC' and 'CL'. This view records the train at Craigendoran pier platform at 11.40am, after the locomotive has run-round its train, and moments before departure to Arrochar. In contrast to the traditional push-pull operation, with a locomotive and stock the departure was propelling so that the change of direction beyond Craigendoran Junction was simply a matter of reversal of the train once the route was reset. It is worth noting that the pier platform and its run-round loop are both electrified, while the Gresley 2-6-2T glimpsed beyond the rear of the train is restarting with a 'Blue Train' replacement duty from Helensburgh (Central) – this was during the period when the electric fleet was withdrawn. To the left, the hanging enamel sign reads 'Platforms 2-5', the pier platform being No 1. The farmer's van in view will have reached the station via a road in the 'Vee' of the pier line and the down Helensburgh line, while above the roof of the van and roofline of the Lower station building can be seen the railings of Upper station. W S Sellar





Viewed from the up platform of Craigendoran (Lower) station, Park Royal railbus No M79971 pauses in the down platform at the Upper station with an Arrochar & Tarbet bound service on September 3, 1962 – only Nos 79970 and 79974 were built for Scotland, the other three Park Royal railcars starting with the London Midland Region at Bedford, being transferred north in 1960. Of note are the whitewashed stones between the levels of the station site, identifying this as the point to change trains, presumably for the West Highland line, the stones at the far end being in the shape of a Clyde steamer. Worth noting are the wooden steps at the end of the footbridge, which are aligned to the central door of the railcar. Bizarrely, although you could sit alongside the driver at the front window, the seat provided faced inwards on these railcars, so kneeling on the seat was common, to take in the forward view. Colour-Rail.com/213242

but it was filling in for the regular Beith railcar by March 15, 1961. What covered the Craigendoran-Arrochar service in its absence went unrecorded, but during the steam revival on the route from Helensburgh (Central), Easter 1961 also saw steam return to the Craigendoran-Arrochar duty, doubtless inspired by a need for greater capacity at Easter. On Easter Saturday, April 1, 1960 the trains were worked by Thompson 'B1' class 4-6-0 No 61197, and on Easter Monday it was British Railways '4MT' Mogul No 76102 on the Arrochar duty. About six weeks later, on Saturday, May 13, 1961 Park Royal No M79973 was in service, and within the, by now, roofless but operational shed at Helensburgh was Wickham railcar No SC79969, in company with Nos 67619, 76091 and 43140, a Gresley 'V3' 2-6-2T and BR Standard and Ivatt '4MT' Moguls, while half a dozen locomotives were in steam in the yard and station, "in contrast with the scene at Ardmore with its rows of silent electric sets."

Subsequent railbus allocations to Helensburgh included Nos M79973 (July to December 1961) and SC79974 (during July 1962) but No M79971 dominated on the duty, returning in November 1961 and used through to March 1963. Exceptions to the rule in regard to railbus cover now tended to be Metro-Cammell built multiple-units, more commonly twin-sets but a triple-set was used on the Arrochar-Craigendoran shuttles on Saturday, July 28, 1962 – the day's report in the *Railway Observer* stated that the West Highland was found to be "completely dieselized." Within a year it was considered "quite an event" to see a railbus working in Scotland, with Arrochar and Ayrshire the noted strongholds.

Frustratingly, the identity of the railcar latterly used goes unreported after the departure of No M79971 from Helensburgh,

A Metro-Cammell three-car suburban diesel multiple-unit is seen in the down platform at Arrochar & Tarbet with the 6.02pm up service for Craigendoran in the summer 1963. Passengers are seen joining the train, the leading vehicle being motor brake second No SC51450. The steps to the underpass and subway provide public entry and exit for the station, and the signal box is beyond.
S Rickard/J & J Collection

but there was more pressing news to report that month. Published on March 27, 1963, *The Reshaping of British Railways* included Craigendoran-Arrochar in the section entitled 'Passenger Services to be Withdrawn,' so perhaps the improved diesel service for the following summer – increased to six trains per day (including Sundays) – was already intended, at least on a local level. In the same document, the published recommendations of the first chairman of the British Railways Board, Dr Richard Beeching, the list of passenger stations and halts to be closed included Rhu Halt, Shandon, Whistlefield Halt and Glen Douglas Halt, but no others on this section of line.

Metro-Cammell diesel-multiple-units were used in the summer of 1963, at least at weekends, so offering some first class accommodation – there was a Scottish Region initiative at the time that saw spare multiple-units that were normally used elsewhere on weekdays, employed at weekends on the two lines to Crianlarich to encourage sightseeing of the lochs from the comfort of a modern train. Sadly the summer of 1963 proved to be the last for the Arrochar local service, and of

the four former push-pull coaches withdrawn, at least 'CL' No 88024 and 'BC' No 80326 were still languishing at the nearby Ardmore yards, still awaiting their fate in late 1963.

The West Highland line platforms at Craigendoran, the station at Shandon and halts at Rhu, Whistlefield and Glen Douglas all closed to passengers from June 15, 1964 – in that same year Rhu lost its public goods services from March 2, with Shandon and Whistlefield following suit on April 6 and May 4 respectively – only a private siding at Shandon thereafter continued in use at these locations. Public goods services were available at Glen Douglas until December 5, 1966, but it is interesting to note the station's brief public status in British Railways days, only since the summer of 1961, so few steam-hauled passenger services would have called. With these changes in mind, Garelochhead and Helensburgh (Upper) became the only stations south of Arrochar & Tarbet on the West Highland line.

Steam Days magazine would like to thank Dave Davidson, Roger Griffiths, John Hooper, John Macnab and Stuart Sellar for their assistance with this article.



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Tail Lamp



Readers' Letters

Cylinder size

Sir: It is usually risky to write in superlatives! On page 49 of the May 2020 issue, in the caption about the 'B8' 4-6-0 at Nottingham (London Road), the caption writer states that the 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ in diameter of the cylinders was the largest of a British locomotive. Not so, Sir! All records I have seen show the largest cylinder diameter in the UK belonging to Urie's four hefty class 'G16' 4-8-0Ts, the engines that worked the hump shunts at Feltham marshalling yard in west London. The ex-GCR 'B8s' may have had the largest diameter *inside* cylinders in the UK, but I haven't checked that. These had 22in diameter outside cylinders. I have attached a picture of 'G16' 4-8-0T No 30493 at Eastleigh in 1957. Is that not a massive cylinder?

In the same issue, the author (twice) and the caption writer (once) quote 4-6-0s Nos 30473 (pages 56 and 57) and 30778 (page 64) as being Urie varieties of their classes. Actually, No 30473 was one of the Maunsell batch of 'H15s' and No 30778 was a Maunsell 'N15' 'Scotch Arthur'. Minor slips, I know, and I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed the article which brought back memories for me of my many years living at Bournemouth and working at Eastleigh in the 1945 to 1969 period.

Colin Boocock (by email)

Hawick and Thirsk sheds – more info

Sir: An interesting newspaper extract about Hawick shed was just forwarded to me by Lim Lindsay of the NERA who is spending some of his isolation days going through ancient newspaper articles looking for anything to do with engine sheds. Seeing how you like little bits for Tail Lamp, might you not insert this as a follow-up to our article (John Hooper and myself) on Hawick shed (August 2018), and there is a similar addition that complements our Starbeck 'Outstations' article (February 2020).

Caledonian Mercury – December 2, 1863
"FALL OF A ROOF AT HAWICK – About twenty minutes after twelve o'clock yesterday morning, the roof of the engine-shed at the railway station, Hawick, fell in with a loud crash. Seven men were in the building at the time. The men say they heard a rending noise immediately before being buried in the debris of iron and slates. Medical assistance was promptly summoned, but when all the men were

extricated it was found that none were dangerously hurt. The four engines in the shed are slightly damaged, but no great loss will be sustained."

Also, please see the attached clipping from the *Leeds Mercury* of January 24, 1887, which clearly shows that Thirsk Town shed was still in use.

"IMPROVEMENTS AT THIRSK JUNCTION – Our Thirsk correspondent says – For many years the North Eastern Railway Company have kept a couple of engines at Thirsk Town Station, being those running between Thirsk and Leeds the first train in the morning and the last train in from Leeds of a night. The engines have occupied the old wooden shed which was built at the time the company ran through trains from Leeds to Thirsk town, and the two drivers, stokers, and cleaners have resided at Sowerby, about two miles from the junction; so that, when an engine was required during the night at the junction, drivers and engines being so far away was a source of inconvenience. The company are now about to erect a new engine-shed on the south of the junction, on a plot of land known as the Gravel Hole, and lying between the main line of rails and the one leading to Leeds, and near to the present blacksmith's shop. We understand the tenders for the erection are let, and the work will soon be started. The company, in the vicinity of where the shed has to be built, has a quantity of land at their disposal, when the shed is erected, which will be of great benefit and convenience to the company. If the drivers, stokers, and cleaners were provided with dwellings in the vicinity, it would be a great advantage to them during the rough weather of winter, thus saving them walking so far to their work."

Roger Griffiths (by email)

Henley-in-Arden – I was there!

Sir: Reading your 'Henley in Arden memories' by Richard Garland allows me to say "I was there" as I too sat on the island platform watching the trains.

I was born into the railway family at Henley-in-Arden in a house that backed on to the goods spur; it had a short path from the garden up the embankment, enabling a short cut to work! My grandfather (Bill Cross), with whom we lived, had become a bobby in April 1914, assigned to Stourbridge Town before entering the Life Guards for the duration. On

his return he moved to Henley-in-Arden box and remained there until retirement in 1958, I have his references to the GWR at age 13 when seeking a job/advancement from his gardeners boy job.

He was the treasurer for the Henley branch of the NUR, which met formally/ informally at the Three Tuns, this job meant he visited many members in their local places of work and this gave me all sorts of local visits as I would accompany him: for Bearley North Box, Danzey for Tamworth (Bill Merrimen) – both the next blocks on either side of Henley – Lapworth (Maurice Long), Hatton, even Bentley Heath crossing box where I was allowed to lock the wicket gates before a 'King' flashed by – very exciting!

Sitting on the island platform bench with the porters Charlie Pitman (lamp porter), Betty Castle would keep an eye. I vaguely remember some older lads would be there – now I wonder, perhaps it was Richard! A few times when he was on afternoons (2-10), mother would drop me off at the box whilst she took the train for shopping, so the picture of light engines awaiting the road is how I recall those days. Another photo in the article which has a story are the goods loop starters, which were replaced and the old masts appeared in the garden at home. The turpentine smell is still with me, and lit many a fire keeping us warm for many winters!

The picture of the loco shunting the yard made me recall Edgar Hodges who was the goods clerk at the Old Station yard. By the '50s, the Old Station building shown in the article was the residence of George Gardner (station master).

I have formal pictures taken by the summer house of the Henley traffic staff and signal staff alone but no pictures of my grandfather at his work place – your article raises the exciting thought – does anyone have any?

Martin Green
Wigginton, Hertfordshire

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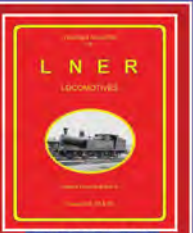
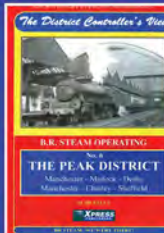
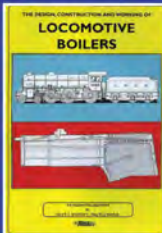
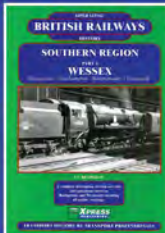
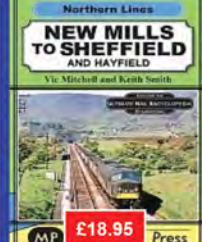
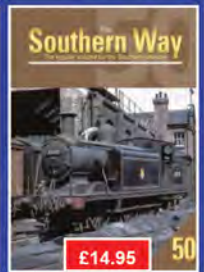
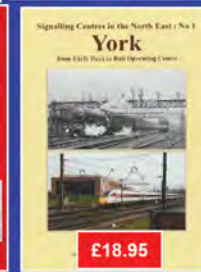
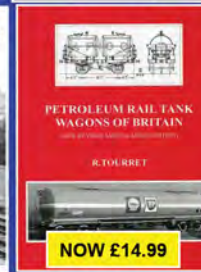
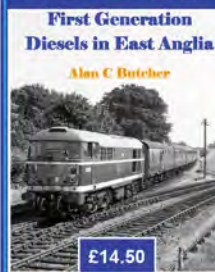
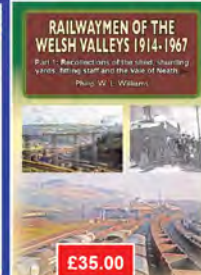
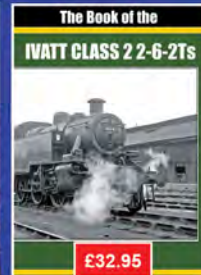
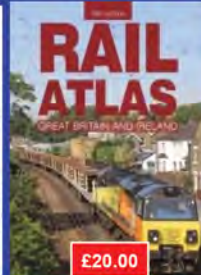
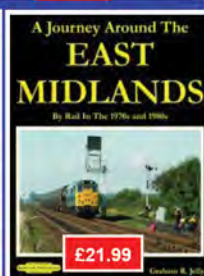
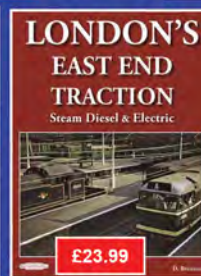
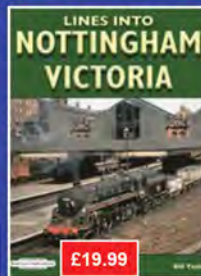
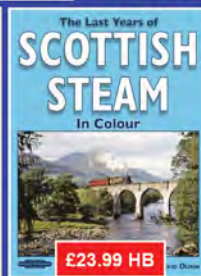
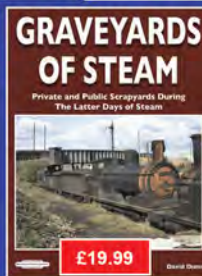
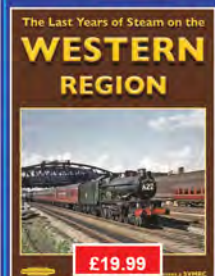
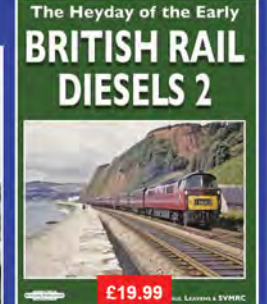
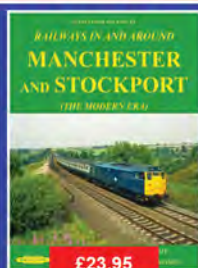
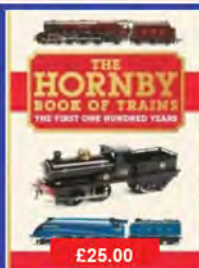
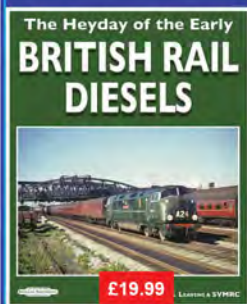
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5" Gauge LNER A4 (Pilot model shown)

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In 1935 the LNER decided to introduce a new streamlined train to run London to Edinburgh. Designed by Nigel Gresley the locomotive was a development of the Class A3 Pacific, but with increased boiler pressure and slightly reduced cylinder size. In common with the A3 the A4 was a three cylinder design.

Famously, on 3rd July 1938 No. 4468 "Mallard" reached a world record speed for steam traction of 126mph. A record that stands to this day. The last of the Class was withdrawn in 1966.

"I was delighted when invited to specify and supervise the development and testing of this iconic locomotive for 5" gauge. Not only is this a technically demanding model, but its body shape is complex. As an award winning professional builder I am delighted with the model, which is the result of an 18 month period of design and pilot build. This is a real head turner."

Mike Pavie



The Model

This coal-fired model features three cylinders with Gresley Holcroft conjugating gear. The copper boiler is silver soldered and hydraulically tested to twice working pressure.

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Summary Specification



Length approx 75"

- Coal-fired live steam
- Silver soldered copper boiler
- Reverser
- Etched brass casing
- Working drain cocks
- Stainless steel motion
- Safety valves
- 3 cylinders (inside cylinder with Gresley Holcroft conjugating gear)
- Boiler feed by axle pump, injector, hand pump
- Bronze cylinders with stainless steel pistons and valves
- Sprung axle boxes with needle roller bearings
- Piston valves
- Mechanical lubricator
- Outside Walschaerts valve gear
- Multi-element superheater
- Choice of liveries
- Choice of name and number
- Fully painted and lined
- Ready-to-run

The body casing is assembled using etched brass sheet. As testament to our confidence each locomotive will be supplied with a full 12 months warranty. Our after sales service is second-to-none.

Limited Production

The LNER A4 will be the subject of a single batch production with delivery planned for September/October 2020. Once the batch is sold there will be no further deliveries of this model for a number of years.

This is a complex model and we have presently booked sufficient factory capacity for the production of just 20 models. If orders are received quickly it may be possible to extend the run a little, but this cannot be guaranteed because of the scheduling of other products (and we have a growing number!).

The 5" gauge A4 is available in a number of liveries, with or without, side valances, and early orderers can have their choice of name and number. The model features a double chimney and non-corridor tender. It is available at the great value for money price of £14,995.00 + post and packaging.

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